WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH GITMO?
REUEL MARC GERECHT

the weekly Standard

JULY 4 / JULY 11, 2005 • $3.95

Summer Reading

Gordon S. Wood on the Founders
Judy Bachrach on 'Washingtonienne'
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and more!

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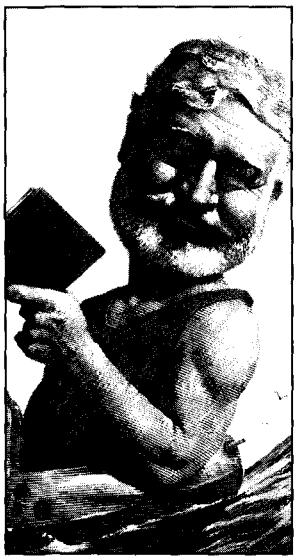

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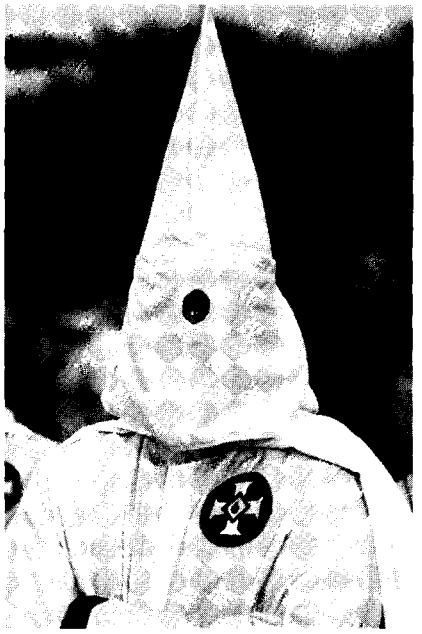
The Hon. Cyclops from West Virginia

Fess up: It's been out a whole week already, but *still* not a soul among you has taken the time to track down and purchase a copy of *Robert C. Byrd: Child of the Appalachian Coalfields*.

And let's keep it that way, shall we?

Rather than plunk down $35 for this 770-page doorstop, let's instead simply indulge ourselves, first, in a loud, lusty snicker over the preposterous promotional campaign West Virginia University Press has prepared for The Great Fossil's long-unawaited autobiography. This kind of thing: "Senator Byrd's journey from the hard-scrabble coalfields to the marbled halls of Congress has inspired generations of people in West Virginia and throughout the nation. From reading the stories of the Founding Fathers as a young boy by the light of a kerosene lamp to the swearing of an oath for more than half a century to guard the United States Constitution, Senator Byrd's life is legendary." Barf.

Also, before we're done with him for good, let us pause yet again to consider that one special aspect of Byrd's "legendary" life that the senator himself apparently remains most desperately eager to obscure. For as the *Washington Post*'s Eric Pianin was careful to point



'Exalted Cyclops' (artist's rendition)

out in a June 19 feature story previewing the book, *Child of the Appalachian Coalfields* is, above all else, "the latest in a long series of attempts by the 87-year-old Democratic patriarch" to "explain" away, "truncate," and "minimize" his ought-to-be-permanently notorious history as a Ku Klux Klan recruiter and locally elected "Exalted Cyclops" in the 1940s—and as an arch-segregationist filibusterer in Congress through much of the 1950s and 1960s.

His Orotundity would now have us believe that his was merely an error of "youth," an episode of "very bad judgment, due to immaturity and a lack of seasoned reasoning." But how conveniently he forgets! Such was the reputation Byrd carried around with him well into his *fifties*, for example, that in 1971, amid rumors that Richard Nixon might nominate him to the Supreme Court, Byrd's own party's soon-to-be presidential candidate felt obliged to announce that he opposed the move. "Let me emphasize," George McGovern remarked about Byrd during a speech at Dartmouth College, "that I cannot accept a man who is mediocre or who is a racist or who is unethical for membership in the United States Supreme Court."

Put *that* in your autobiography and smoke it, Mr. Inspiration-to-us-All. ♦

The Kennedy Chronicles, cont.

For both edification and relaxation, The Scrapbook loves to read about the mating habits of animals—the most entertaining of which are neither the flatworms (males come complete with spikes and poison glands) nor the California sea lions (peeping toms), but a Massachusetts specimen known as the Kennedy man.

We enjoyed very much the early '90s, details from the William Kennedy Smith rape trial (he was acquitted), in which it was revealed how Uncle Teddy walked in on son Patrick and his prospective paramour with love's pure light in his eye. She alleged that the senator was wearing a long dress shirt "with no pants" and walking "kinda wobbly."

But now, Cousin Willie, who recently beat a second rape charge, has distinguished himself with yet another sexual harassment complaint. Thanks to the civic-minded folks at *thesmokinggun.com*, we have all the details. While Dr. Smith has reportedly reached a six-figure settlement with Laura Hamilton, who formerly worked for him at his Center for International Rehabilitation (CIR), the *Smoking Gun* obtained a lengthy excerpt of a 40-page complaint that would've landed in U.S. District Court had Smith not paid up.

Chockablock with details, the complaint reads like a dirty romance novel, if your idea of romance is getting felt up by your pervy boss. Smith, it seems, was disparaging of Hamilton's disabled boyfriend, whom he called "that amputee," and subjected Hamilton to repeated neck and shoulder massages while providing feedback on the "quality of her work." In one 1999 instance, she alleges he initiated "a playful shoving match" in which he threw her "against a wall in the bar," which resulted in a noticeable bruise on her arm.

The main event, however, comes in 2000, when Hamilton became pregnant. In addition to repeatedly subjecting her to creepy questioning about her personal

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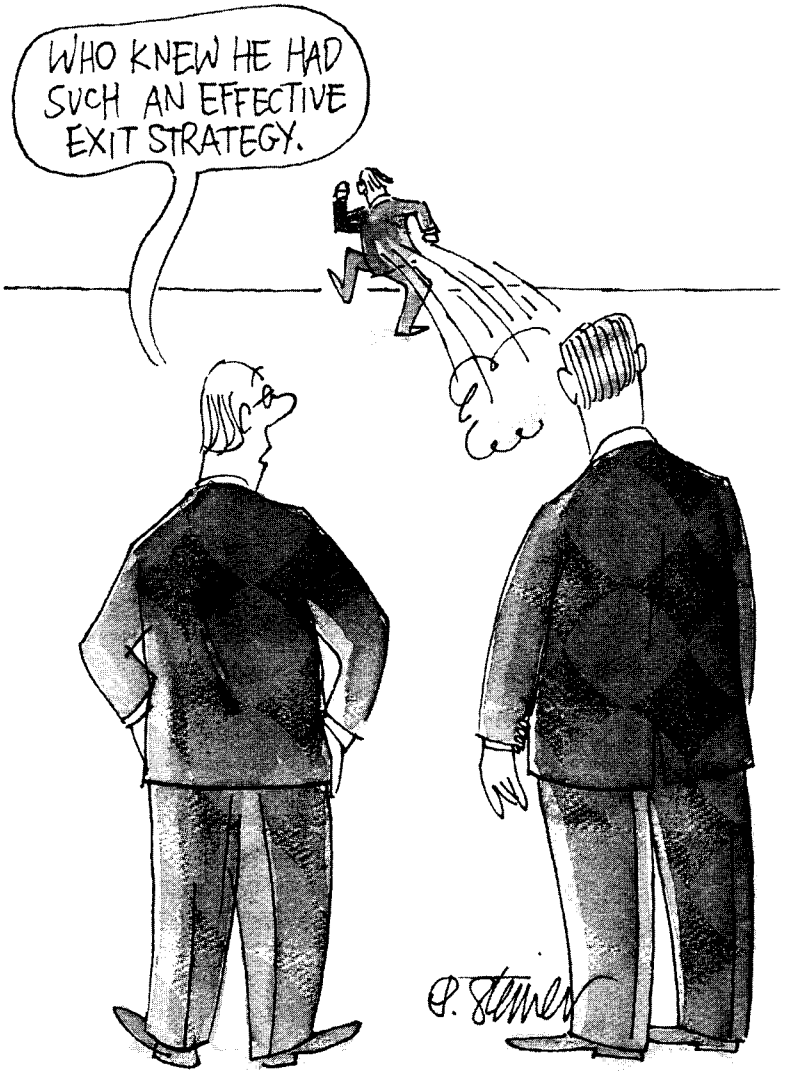

life, along with "unwelcome touching," Smith allegedly told her that pregnant women "glowed" and that they were "irresistible." Not that he tried to resist. During a 2001 UNICEF conference, CIR arranged for Hamilton to stay alone at Smith's guest apartment in New York. On the second night, Smith arrived without warning. Though Hamilton says she was seven months along at the time, Smith gave her a glass of red wine, and when she declined it, he "continued to insist that she drink with him."

Afterwards, she says, he demanded they watch television in his bedroom, told her he was "extremely attracted to pregnant women," and repeatedly stroked her belly, inching his hand below her waist, and sticking his tongue in her ear. When he grabbed her chin and tried to force a kiss, according to the complaint, she repeatedly refused, at which point Dr. Smith said he "admired her strength of character." When she went to her room and barricaded the door, she says she heard him pacing around the apartment.

There's lots more where that came from, but THE SCRAPBOOK would rather light a candle than curse William Kennedy Smith's darkness and recommends that he check out a website called Prego Planet. The bad news is, it'll set him back $19.95 a month. And while the "inflate-a-babes" he encounters there are subject to leaks, they have one distinct advantage over Smith's usual quarry: They can't file suit. ♦

A Happy Ending

On April 30 in Baghdad, Iraqi insurgents kidnapped Douglas Wood—a 64-year-old Australian contractor who lives in Alamo, California—after "luring" him to what he thought was a "business meeting," according to Associated Press. Wood was held hostage for 47 days, during which time he appeared on videotape surrounded by machine-gun toting thugs and called for coalition troops to withdraw from Iraq.

Wood has since been freed, and last week spoke not under duress. "Frankly, I'd like to apologize to President Bush and Prime Minister Howard for things I said under duress," he told reporters in Australia, after his rescue by a combined U.S.-Iraqi force. "I actually believe that I am proof positive that the current policy of training the Iraqi army, of recruiting, training them worked because it was the Iraqis that got me out."

It was a remarkable statement from a man who had just escaped an unspeakable ordeal. And, as you might expect, the Aussie reporters questioning Wood at Melbourne Airport quickly changed the subject. But Wood wasn't finished:

> Once again, I am very committed to the policies of the two governments. . . . I think the quicker we hire, recruit, train and get the police and the Iraqi army up to speed, then, when they are fully engaged and ready, they can start going around door-to-door and developing the confidence with the Iraqi population that the population will not be scared to [cooperate with authorities].

Seems to us the White House might want to save a couple of seats for Mr. Wood at the next state dinner. ♦

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Casual

Cocooning

I have lived in two large cities in my life, Washington and Los Angeles, and if you have a taste for bumping into famous people, they are good places to live.

In Los Angeles, I was not employed by the Industry—as they call the movie business out there—and so was seldom privileged to see the big stars of the time (the 1980s). Anyway, most of them lived in a kind of protective cocoon, surrounded by their "people," and resided in neighborhoods that didn't invite scrutiny.

But celebrities of lesser magnitude were not only accessible, but occasionally visible in everyday life. You never knew who you might encounter in a grocery store (Kathy Bates), a restaurant men's room (Muhammad Ali), a bookstore (Hedy Lamarr), or a hospital waiting room (John Forsythe). My wife and I were once standing in line at a discount frame store when we realized that the pleasant, elderly man waiting beside us—holding two small paintings and some plexiglass frames—was Vincent Price. Our travel agent was Jean Bartel, Miss America of 1943. My dentist fixed the teeth of Stella Stevens, and my wife shared a gynecologist with Madonna.

In Washington, the resident stars of yesteryear are of greater interest to me than in Los Angeles. But, I regret to say, that protective cocoon grows more voluminous by the day, and the kind of security that used to surround the president of the United States is now routine for such dubious figures as the mayor of the District of Columbia.

Any visitor to the nation's capital is painfully aware of the extent to which fear of terrorism has transformed the life of the city. Busy thoroughfares are now closed to automobiles, and sidewalks are cluttered with barriers and cops. Government offices are fortified like military installations, and familiar tourist sites are cordoned off from easy access. The city looks besieged, and its prominent inhabitants live in a parallel universe.

To be sure, it was not always so. When I was a boy, you could climb the staircase of the Washington Monument, peer through the telescope at the Naval Observatory, and walk into the Treasury to trade eight quarters for a two-dollar bill. An excursion to the White House did not require a background check or prearranged list of names, and the lobby of the General Accounting Office did not feature a metal detector. You could park your car on the grounds of the Capitol, and walk up the steps without triggering an armed response.

Moreover, the famous, and formerly famous, were casually ubiquitous. Harry Truman would take his early morning walk in the company of a single Secret Service agent. I once attended an event a few yards away from Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, and another at a suburban mall featuring Eleanor Roosevelt. No security in evidence. One day, as a high-school student, I screwed up the courage to introduce myself to Dean Acheson in Lafayette Square. He was perfectly cordial, of course, and shook my hand; but clearly he would have preferred me to keep my distance.

Nor was the historic past necessarily remote. The three spinster daughters of the Civil War general Philip Sheridan—Mary, Louise, and Irene—lived comfortably on Massachusetts Avenue, overlooking their father's equestrian statue. On sunny Saturday mornings, you could see them taking the air on their marble balcony. I took piano lessons, from the daughter of a czarist general, in a studio above a movie theater. Late one Friday afternoon, as I came out the door, there was Pat Nixon parking her station wagon on Connecticut Avenue, and walking with Tricia and Julie into the Avalon.

Today, the vice president's wife would not casually choose to go to a matinee, drive her own car, park it on the street, nor cross the sidewalk, without a phalanx of uniformed, and plainclothes, guards in attendance. Pedestrians would be held hostage until the perimeter was secure, and the sounds of the neighborhood would be drowned by sirens and horns.

The difference is said to be changing times and a more dangerous world. But is that true? In 1950 two Puerto Rican nationalists tried to assassinate Harry Truman on the sidewalk outside Blair House on Pennsylvania Avenue, killing one White House policeman. Four years later, four Puerto Ricans opened fire in the House of Representatives, wounding five members. Nerves were shattered, to be sure, but Pennsylvania Avenue didn't close, and Capitol Hill was not transformed into an armory.

For that matter, consider the simpler, happier, more innocent, America at the turn of the 20th century. In 1901, President William McKinley was assassinated while shaking hands in a receiving line. He was the third president in just 36 years to be shot dead while in office (James Garfield, in 1881, at a railroad station, and Abraham Lincoln, in 1865, at a theater). Either the good old days were considerably less pleasant than we care to remember, or it doesn't take a lot to frighten 21st-century Americans.

Philip Terzian

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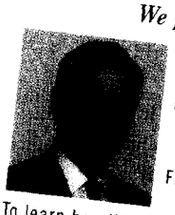

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Habitat For Whom?

Having served as the president of Habitat for Humanity of Colorado, the executive director of Habitat of Tijuana-San Diego, and the director of Habitat for Humanity International's education ministries, I take issue with Philip Chalk's "Jimmy Carter's Favorite Charity" (June 13), which seems to have the primary purpose of denying Carter credit for the one accomplishment most can agree is a positive one—his involvement with Habitat for Humanity. Indeed, had this piece come from the *New York Times* or the BBC, it would have provided excellent fodder for The Scrapbook.

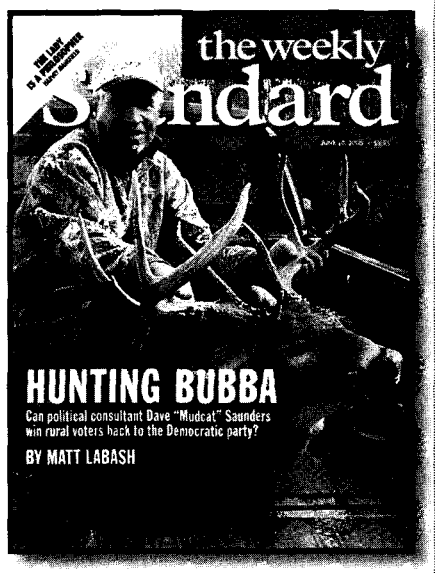
Habitat for Humanity may not offer the most efficient way of providing affordable housing, but the cost extrapolations Chalk makes overlook the fact that it is a worldwide ministry, building in 100 countries at a combined annual rate of 23,000 units. Chalk's math doesn't hold up against the facts.

Admittedly, Habitat doesn't build for the poorest of the poor, but the suggestion that the partner families are "almost" middle-income will come as a great surprise to most of them. This assertion is akin to the elitist, out-of-touch journalism against which The Weekly Standard usually speaks so effectively. The generalized attacks on Habitat affiliates, donors, and beneficiaries, all to discredit Jimmy Carter, could have come from Howard Dean's playbook.

More egregious is Chalk's reporting on Millard Fuller, Habitat's founder and, until recently, its CEO. Chalk's suggestion that Fuller is the product of a hippie commune demonstrates a gross misunderstanding of both the man and his mission. Anyone who has spent any time with Fuller knows this representation is nonsensical. Chalk's assertion that Fuller was fired over accusations of impropriety makes me suspect that he did his research at the *Washington Post*.

Fuller was fired, along with his wife, over philosophical differences, many of which were tied to the organization's drift away from the aggressive expansion Fuller promotes. He has created a new organization, the Fuller Center for Housing, to allow him to continue pursuing his goal of eliminating poverty housing.

Habitat for Humanity is, indeed, a conservative's dream nonprofit. It requires its beneficiaries to help themselves, it provides for a voluntary transfer of wealth, and it creates new homeowners



and taxpayers. Beyond that, Habitat provides a place for people of diverse social, racial, political, and economic backgrounds to come together for a common good. Cultural and ideological differences take a back seat when you're shingling a roof together on a hot summer's day.

David Snell
Fuller Center for Housing
Colorado Springs, CO

The sanctimony of Jimmy Carter makes Habitat for Humanity an appealing target, and Philip Chalk is right to critique the organization's saccharine style and cost structure. But, as a housing policy conservative, I would urge a more nuanced view.

The fact that Habitat's beneficiaries are the aspiring and upwardly mobile shows it is choosing well. One can never assume that those who advance would have done so anyway. Moreover, Chalk is certainly wrong to urge the organization to take more risks and thus countenance more delinquencies and foreclosures, in the name of assisting the poorest of the poor. Mortgage foreclosures and defaults represent a serious threat to the efforts of neighboring property owners striving to maintain their own homes and property values. Too-easy credit—urged by the U.S. government through the Federal Housing Administration and the Community Reinvestment Act requirements imposed on banks—has created de-facto "default belts" in lower-income communities across the country, threatening the efforts of those who do not default.

Further, Chalk seriously overstates Habitat's reliance on government support—a tiny $14 million line-item in a HUD budget that includes some $17 billion in Section 8 rent subsidies (a huge back-door welfare program that's grown like Topsy) is just not significant. Conservatives should focus instead on the fact that Habitat—whether it has done so as efficiently as possible or not—has demonstrated that a major national social program can be mounted in the post-welfare state era by relying almost entirely on philanthropy, volunteer labor, and donations.

In doing so, it has reminded us that small houses can be good houses—and that we need not spend hundreds of thousands of dollars per apartment, as federally subsidized construction programs do, if we choose to provide housing for those of modest means.

Howard Husock
Brookline, MA

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PHILIP CHALK RESPONDS: David Snell is apparently more concerned here with perceived slights visited on his new employer and on Jimmy Carter than he is with the article in question. I explicitly addressed only Habitat's U.S. activities rather than its overseas efforts, which consume a small fraction of the $1 billion or so that Habitat and its affiliates raise annually. Snell does serve up his own guess about whether Habitat beneficiaries might view themselves as almost middle-income. Similarly, I doubt many would describe themselves as "poor," and with good reason: They are not.

Given the opportunity, Habitat representatives did not dispute reports of Millard Fuller's firing based on allegations of groping female employees. And while it may be that there was somewhere a commune in the mid-1970s that could not be characterized as a hippie encampment, the odds are long that Fuller managed to stumble into just that one.

Howard Husock may well be right about Habitat's benefits for families in the second quintile of incomes from the bottom. All the more reason for the organization to bring its teary marketing into line with its practice, by dropping talk of those who are "poor" and "homeless," with whom it has virtually nothing to do.

And it is not "certainly wrong" for me to suggest in passing that Habitat "restore a focus on Americans in the bottom fifth of household incomes, and develop or expand more cost-effective programs for higher-risk clients." This could be accomplished in any number of ways—some already employed by more imaginative Habitat affiliates—that involve no direct lending or exposure to defaults at all. Finally, conservatives and anyone else interested in fostering home ownership and financial responsibility would do well to look past the obvious fact "that small houses can be good houses" and focus dispassionately on the question of what best could be done with $1 billion a year. ♦

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the weekly Standard

Remember Tax Cuts?

Tax cuts—especially the supply-side tax cuts of May 2003—were the controversial center of the Bush administration's first-term economic policy. Most Democrats opposed most of the tax rate reductions. John Kerry promised to repeal many of them if elected president. The president, and Republicans running for the Senate and House, promised to make them permanent. (For reasons having to do with artificial out-year budget calculations, most of the Bush tax cuts are scheduled to expire over the next few years.)

Bush won and Kerry lost. Republicans increased their margins in Congress. So a bill to make the tax cuts permanent should be moving through Congress as we speak, no? No. The president occasionally refers to his wish that this be done, but tax-cutting has taken a back seat—way at the back of the bus—to his top priority for the second term, Social Security reform.

But Social Security reform is going nowhere. Whatever the merits of the president's ideas, they're not going to become law this year or next. There's no dishonor in trying and failing to enact a major public policy reform. But it's going to be time, soon, to throw in the towel. A sense of dignity and propriety argue against too sudden an abandonment of this effort, so we'll spend a couple of months reading about good-faith efforts at jump-starting reform. But surely Social Security reform will be allowed to die with dignity by, say, Labor Day—perhaps little noticed in the excitement of a Supreme Court fight. The president can take credit for laying the foundation for future efforts, and the caravan can move on.

There has, of course, been a political cost to the emphasis on Social Security reform. Part of it is an opportunity cost. If the president talks about Social Security, he doesn't talk about tax cuts. But it's a little worse than that. The message the president has been delivering on Social Security is one of doom and gloom—the horrible burdens overhanging us in the future if we don't start eating our spinach with benefit cuts, and squirreling away our nuts in private accounts. As a political drumbeat, this message has drowned out any talk of economic opportunity and optimism. In fact, in recent attempts to sell Social Security reform, the president with all his talk of "economic security" has almost begun sounding like our statist friends across the Atlantic, Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder.

Luckily, that's all coming to an end. And it's not too soon for the president to start recapturing the Reaganite high ground of tax cuts and economic growth and opportunity. He can do that in two easy and obvious ways.

First, he can make clear that his tax cuts worked. The 2003 cuts in personal income rates, and in the tax rates on dividends and capital gains, have helped produce economic growth of better than 4 percent a year—as non-tax-cutting European economies have stagnated. Unemployment here is down to 5.1 percent, while it remains 10 percent or more in Germany and France. The Dow is up by about 24 percent since May 2003, and capital spending by business is up some 22 percent.

And tax revenues are up. As Stephen Moore has pointed out in the *Wall Street Journal*, the supply-side Laffer curve has worked. Federal tax receipts are up by over 15 percent so far this fiscal year—and state tax receipts are up 7.5 percent. Individual and corporate receipts are up some 30 percent in the two years since the tax cut. The budget deficit looks as if it will be down by some $60 billion this year.

It's a Bush administration success story. They should tout it. Usually politicians seek to forget—and to have others forget—their failures. In this case, the Bush administration has forgotten to take credit for its successes. Tax cuts have been orphaned. But it's never too late to remind the American people that Republicans pushed through, and the Democrats opposed, tax cuts.

And then the president can ask that the tax cuts be made permanent. Start the drumbeat slowly, build up a bit in the fall, and then you've laid the groundwork for a strong State of the Union in January: Insist that Congress's top 2006 agenda item be to make the cuts permanent. Assuring the permanence of the tax cuts would provide a tonic for the stock market, and for investor and consumer confidence. It would also be a much-needed tonic for the Republican party.

It can't happen too soon: *Arrivederci*, Social Security reform! *Buon giorno*, tax cuts!

—*William Kristol*

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Reading Them the Riyadh Act

Condoleezza Rice prods our dictatorial allies.

BY JONATHAN KARL

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

ON JUNE 20 IN CAIRO, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice did something no U.S. secretary of state has ever done in the Middle East. She forcefully and publicly told America's most important allies in the region to stop oppressing their citizens. She called on Egypt to lift the emergency decree that has given Hosni Mubarak near absolute power since the assassination of Anwar Sadat 24 years ago. She called on Saudi Arabia to give women voting rights and to free three individuals imprisoned earlier this year for criticizing the government. In Riyadh the following day, reporters asked Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal about the speech. With Secretary Rice by his side, he said, "I have not read it, to my eternal shame."

In another first, Rice devoted a considerable amount of her public and private comments to political reform and, specifically, women's rights. The Saudis, however, aren't exactly shaking in their sandals. They figure U.S. concerns about the flow of oil and the fight against terrorism will continue to trump all this talk about freedom and democracy. When asked by a reporter about the three political prisoners Rice wants released, Prince Saud said curtly, "I told the secretary of state that they have broken a law."

But both the Saudis and the Egyptians feel a need to at least appear like they are reforming, and that is a start. At Rice's joint press conference with Prince Saud, the Saudis put three women journalists in the front row. They were dressed in the traditional *abaya*, covering them from head to toe in black—or almost head to toe. One of the women wore open-toed shoes revealing nail polish so bright it was impossible not to notice. Prince Saud called on the women for the first and last questions. "We like to open with the ladies and close with the ladies," he said. Rice seemed impressed by the presence of the women, telling reporters later "that was both interesting and important." The gesture, however, may have been more patronizing than meaningful. Saudi Arabia has neither freedom of the press nor basic rights for women.

By virtually any measure of political rights and civil liberties, Saudi Arabia deserves a spot on Rice's "outposts of tyranny" list. Three separate State Department reports over the past year—on human rights, on religious freedom, on human trafficking—portray Saudi Arabia as one of the most repressive places on earth. Freedom House gives Saudi Arabia its lowest rating for political freedom, a distinction shared by North Korea. Three of the six countries Rice called "outposts of tyranny" (Iran, Belarus, and Zimbabwe) are actually rated higher by Freedom House, that is, they are more free than Saudi Arabia. The Freedom House ratings don't paint a pretty picture of Egypt either—giving it just slightly better marks than Iran and Belarus.

None of this mattered much to U.S. policymakers before President Bush put democracy in the Middle East at the center of his foreign policy. Rice's speech in Cairo, echoing the theme of President Bush's second inaugural address, provides a new yardstick to measure U.S. policy in the region. As Rice said in Cairo, "For 60 years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region here in the Middle East—and we achieved neither. Now, we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people."

The speech was crafted by a 25-year-old speechwriter named Christian Brose; his earlier drafts went even further, prompting one senior career State Department official to remind Rice's team about the economic and strategic importance of Saudi Arabia. "Do you want $11-dollar-a-gallon gasoline?" the official asked.

In a measure of how important the White House viewed the speech and Rice's trip to the region, Mike Gerson came along for the ride. Gerson is one of the three or four most influential people in the White House. Gerson penned the presidential inaugural; he has also earned a reputation as perhaps the best presidential speechwriter since Ted Sorensen. Gerson, though, has traded in his speechwriting job to become a senior policy adviser with a vast portfolio that includes the democracy agenda. In the two days before the speech, Gerson was on hand, making edits and taking notes.

Rice's words and actions on her first tour of the Middle East as secretary of state were bold and dramatic compared with those of her predecessors. But no other administration has ever really tried pushing democracy in the Arab world. Jimmy Carter did press the shah of Iran on human rights in the late 1970s, but the results were disastrous, as the shah fell from power only to be replaced by Ayatollah Khomeini. And not even Carter, with all his talk about human rights, put pressure on Egypt or Saudi Arabia.

When Madeleine Albright, as America's first female secretary of state, visited Saudi Arabia, she meekly said, "I hope that in our future discussions in New York [at the U.N.] and when we meet again, we can speak about the role of women in your societies and around the world." They never did get around to that discus-

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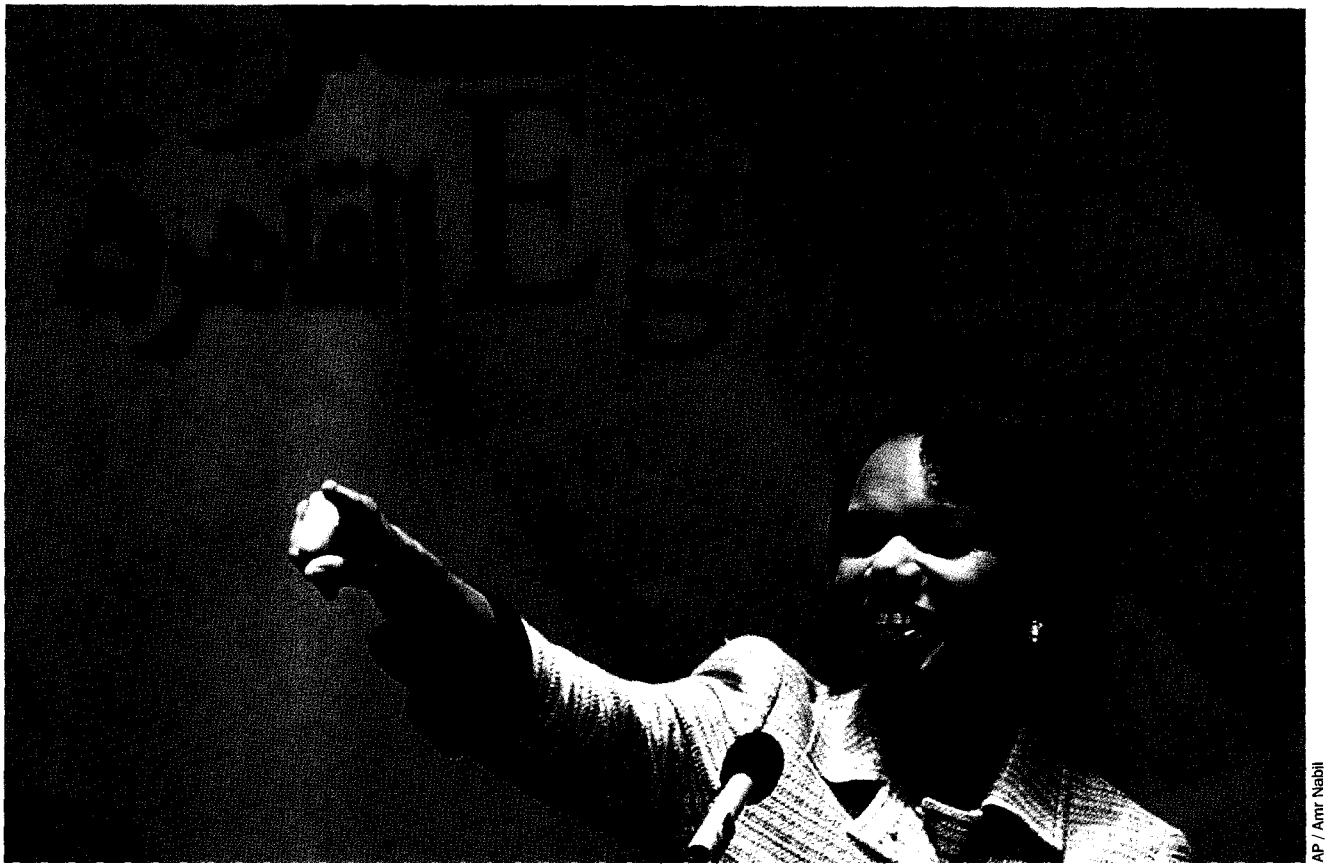

AP / Amr Nabil

sion. Compare that with Rice's loud declaration in Cairo: "Half a democracy is not a democracy."

Rice's actions in the Middle East are, however, carefully calibrated to pressure allies like Egypt and Saudi Arabia as hard as possible without undermining their important strategic relationships with the United States. That means pushing but not too hard. One of the most visible symbols of Saudi Arabia's abysmal record on women's rights is the law against women driving. I asked Rice about it in an interview following her Cairo speech and was surprised when she refused to criticize this blatantly discriminatory law. "I'm going to worry about women voting," she says. "I don't know about women driving."

Could it be that Secretary Rice won't even criticize a law that makes it illegal for women to drive? "It's just a line I have not wanted to cross," she says. "I think it is important that we do have some boundaries about what it is that we are trying to achieve. . . . I have not wanted to in any society go in and say women ought to be able to do this activity or that activity." The driving ban, she suggests, may or may not be a violation of women's rights in Saudi society. On the other hand, it could simply be a custom that is perfectly acceptable to Saudi women. The way you can tell, she argues, is by getting political rights for women.

"I am quite certain that when women are able to express their aspirations and their views in the political system, we will see what is really custom and what really does matter to Saudi women." Even with full political rights for Saudi women, Rice suggests, the law against women driving could remain. "The United States has to recognize even after democratic processes take place, places are not going to look like the United States in terms of social mores."

Rice tries to balance the tough talk about democracy with talk of humility in foreign policy. When I ask her why she isn't tougher on the Saudis, she says, "Let's be a little bit humble about what the United States had to go through to fully extend the democratic enterprise." She points out, as she often does, that it took nearly a century to end slavery, that women didn't get the right to vote until the early 20th century, and that blacks didn't get full voting rights until 1965.

Rice has shown less timidity toward Egypt. In Cairo, she met with a small group of opposition figures, including Ayman Nour, who had been jailed on what the United States considered trumped-up charges. Rice strongly objected when Nour was arrested in January and canceled an earlier planned trip to Egypt. When Nour met with Rice, he quietly passed her a note, thanking her for standing up for him while he was in jail.

But even in Egypt, Rice pulled some punches. She did not meet with the two largest and most important opposition movements: The Muslim Brotherhood and Kifaya. Kifaya, or "enough," is a coalition of activists that has held several prominent anti-Mubarak rallies over the past few months, including one on May 25 in Cairo that was broken up by club-wielding thugs who beat up demonstrators, including many women. Rice condemned the beatings, but didn't get around to inviting members of the group to her meeting with opposition leaders.

As for the Muslim Brotherhood, Rice points out that the group is

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banned by the Egyptian government and says, "We are going to respect Egyptian laws." But if you're going to support democratic activists in authoritarian countries, you are inevitably going to deal with banned groups. In fact, earlier this year, Rice herself met with dissidents from Belarus whose activities are certainly illegal in that country.

Still, Rice pressed Egypt far more than any senior U.S. official ever has. With Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit by her side, Rice said it is "essential" that Egypt hold free and fair elections this fall, something Egypt has never done. Gheit responded, "Who would object to fair, transparent elections? Everybody wants a fair, transparent election, and they will be so, I assure you."

Almost nobody believes that. For 24 years, President Mubarak has ruled without facing a political opponent. Now he has promised competitive elections, but the rules are so onerous as to virtually guarantee the exclusion of any serious challenger. If Egypt's elections fall short, however, the Egyptians will have to explain why. And Rice will have to explain what the United States is going to do about it.

All this Arab democracy talk is viewed with apprehension in Israel, long hailed as the only democracy in the Middle East. The Israelis have watched Hamas and Hezbollah fare well in elections and would rather deal with reliable Arab despots than virulently anti-Israel Arab populists. "Let's assume a quick democratization of Egypt or Jordan," says Israeli political scientist Yehezkel Dror. "Will it strengthen their peace with Israel? Certainly not. The ruling elites understand the need for peace with Israel. But the public in the streets, the masses in the marketplaces, definitely don't."

Rice isn't necessarily pushing for *quick* democratization, but she, like the president, is willing to take short-term risks for a chance to make the history books. As one of her senior advisers told me: "As goes the democracy effort, so goes her legacy." And so goes the president's. ♦

The Bush Paradox

Why do his fortunes lag as the economy improves?

BY JEFFREY BELL AND CESAR CONDA

THREE YEARS AGO, in the 2002 election cycle, the economy was sluggish, struggling to emerge from the recession and the dislocations of 9/11. According to most polls, President Bush received solid ratings on his handling of the economy. Today, GDP growth has firmed at 4 percent a year, and several million new jobs have been created since the economy bottomed in the first Bush term. The inflation rate remains low, as have long-term interest rates, including home mortgage rates. President Bush has unfavorable ratings on his handling of the economy, and the trend of recent polls has been down.

Whatever happened to the old rules? Has a strong and improving economy become a political negative for sitting presidents?

Part of the anomaly undoubtedly relates to the politics of wartime. The president was highly rated for his conduct of the war on terrorism in 2002, and some of that capital appeared to spill over onto his economic rating. By the same token, the spike in suicide bombings in Iraq in the last few months is no doubt casting a pall on voters' ratings of the president's performance on issues seemingly unrelated to the war. The lesson, if there is one: A wartime government is well advised either to conduct a visibly successful war effort, or at least to be holding its own in the political debate over why progress has slowed or gone into reverse.

The president's failure to reap political benefits from a strong economy may stem from aspects of the domestic debate as well. It seems implausible that voters, tens of millions of whom have refinanced their homes and improved their balance sheets, are utterly oblivious to recent economic gains. It is interesting that one of the recent national polls found voters' view of the strength of the economy going up even while the president's rating on economic issues has continued to slide.

In the president's first four years, it was often the Democrats who were baffled by this sort of conundrum. That is, George W. Bush seemed consistently to overperform politically. To Democrats, his political strength was greater than the facts of the issues—the war, the economy, domestic issues like health care, values issues like gay rights and stem-cell research—seemed to warrant. Today, particularly on the economy, he appears weaker than the objective facts would seem to warrant. What has changed?

Not the ups and downs of war. The failure to find weapons of mass destruction and the retreat from Falluja were, if anything, lower lows for Bush and his administration than the current wave of suicide bombings. There are Democratic strategists still in a state of shock that Bush was able to win the election in the face of such stinging setbacks in the war.

Not polarization. The hallmark of national politics since 2000 has been intense partisanship and ideological strife in a closely divided nation. So far in the second term, this shows no sign of changing.

In fact, to many Republicans the continuation of a high degree of polarization has come as something of a surprise. In the elections of 2002 and 2004, it was Bush and the Republicans

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who seemed adept at riding the wave of polarization. Both these elections were brutal, closely contested, and in doubt until the very end. Yet not only did Bush defeat John Kerry, but Republicans gained House and Senate seats in both 2002 and 2004.

Democratic attrition was particularly striking in the Senate. From an edge of 50-49-1 following the 2001 defection of James Jeffords, Democrats found themselves at 44-55-1 in 2005. Under Tom Daschle the Senate had become the focus of bitter-end obstruction of the Bush agenda, on issues ranging from judges to energy to the faith-based initiative. With the Democratic losses and Daschle's own defeat in South Dakota, many Republicans assumed that Senate Democrats would begin to scale back their confrontational stance toward Bush.

Instead, Democratic Senate leaders have widened their use of the filibuster from Bush judicial nominees to U.N. ambassador-designate John Bolton, and may even filibuster the president's first appointment to the Supreme Court. On a series of second-tier issues like bankruptcy reform and class-action lawsuits, increased Republican Senate strength has helped carry the day. But the significance of these Bush victories is small in comparison with the impact of Senate-centered polarization on Bush's high-profile second-term agenda on the economy and Social Security.

In the first term, Bush won his biggest domestic victories with the tax-cut bills of 2001 and 2003. Both of these bills cleared the Senate under budget rules that prohibit filibusters. The 2003 tax cut, which moved up the effective date of the 2001 tax cuts and achieved a bold, unexpectedly large reduction in the double taxation of dividends, cleared its major Senate hurdle on a tie vote.

The heart of Bush's second-term domestic agenda is three big items: making the first-term tax cuts permanent; reforming Social Security by scaling back its demographic deficit and carving personal retirement accounts from the payroll tax; followed by broad-based tax reform, to be shaped later this year by the report of a Bush-appointed study group.

These three proposals, the third of which is not yet defined, have one simple element in common: They cannot be passed with Republican votes alone. None of them fit into the simple-majority context of a budget resolution. This year's Republican-backed budget resolution, which stretches ahead five years, can extend some tax cuts scheduled to expire at the end of 2008 to the end of 2010, and almost certainly will do so. But to make the tax cuts permanent under Senate budget rules, a minimum of 60 senators would be needed to overcome a point of order. The same 60 votes would be needed to enact a broad reform of the tax code, or to make the huge changes in Social Security the president has asked for. Of their nature, the three big items of Bush's second-term agenda will have to be bipartisan, or they won't happen at all.

Six months ago, it appeared plausible that Bush could push one or more of these things toward enactment. In the first term, he effectively used the presidential bully pulpit to overcome resistance to his war strategy and his tax-cut-centered economic strategy. But there appears to be something about his second-term economic agenda that is not only resistant to the bully pulpit, but shows signs of denying Bush credit for the kind of strong economic growth that normally benefits an incumbent administration. As long as this is the political dynamic, Democrats have no incentive to reduce the level of confrontation—not when the very thing that often stung them in the first Bush term appears to be helping them now.

What explains this dynamic? One explanation may be that the three big-ticket items are not just bipartisan, they are interrelated. Momentum on one can improve the chances for momentum on one or more of the others. It can be argued, for instance, that the stock market has underperformed this year in relation to the robust growth of business profits and continued low long-term interest rates. One factor restraining stock prices has to be the growing likelihood that this Congress will not make the tax cuts permanent. In turn, the lack of a bull market this year undoubtedly makes the idea of personal accounts appear less attractive than otherwise would be the case.

For the dynamic of obstruction and polarization to change, and barring a road-to-Damascus turnaround by Senate Democrats, the politics of the economic debate must change in the president's favor. The likeliest way for this to happen is by a return to confrontational debate on the tax issue.

The Bush tax cuts have now been effective for about two years, and more and more conclusive data on their impact is becoming available. Recent numbers from the Congressional Budget Office show a surge in income tax revenue (around 15 percent higher than a year earlier) well beyond most predictions—and utterly contrary to Democratic lamentations about a hollowing out of the tax base due to Bush's "tax cuts for the rich." With little left to gain in this Congress by downplaying partisan disagreement on taxes, the administration should soon be taking credit for the success of the 2001-2003 tax cuts in stimulating strong growth, as well as producing unexpectedly strong revenues.

With uncertain present prospects of congressional movement on Social Security or making the tax cuts permanent, the report of Bush's tax reform group later this summer takes on great importance. In the present mood, little will be gained by trying to split the difference between the parties' approaches to tax reform, or by offering incremental change. As Bob Packwood figured out as Senate Finance Committee chairman in 1986, a sudden movement toward a very broad tax base and unexpectedly low rates is much more likely to get people's attention than tinkering on details. Ask Senate Democrats to explain why a simple, low-rate tax code should be still another occasion for obstruction. The minute they open their mouths, the political dynamics of the economic debate will again begin to favor the president. ♦

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From:

U.S. Business Owners to Repeal the Estate Tax

June 27, 2005

To Senators Blanche Lincoln, Mark Pryor, Mary Landrieu, David Vitter, Hillary Clinton, Charles Schumer, George Voinovich, Mike DeWine, Gordon Smith and Ron Wyden:

As active and growing family businesses across the country, we strongly urge you to support permanent elimination of estate and generation-skipping taxes, now commonly referred to as the "Death Tax."

Permanent repeal of the burdensome Death Tax will help reduce the time, money, and energy expended by family business owners on estate planning and preserve companies that often are sold for tax reasons when a principal owner dies. We also are concerned about the temporary nature of the Death Tax repeal provisions. Because of the so-called "sunset provision" contained in the 2001 law, the Death Tax will be fully repealed for only one year in 2010. Unless the law is changed, the onerous Death Tax will be reinstated in 2011 with rates ranging up to the confiscatory level of 55 percent - or more than half of the family's assets. The uncertainty surrounding repeal will require family business owners across the U.S. to continue with estate-planning strategies that are costly, cumbersome and time consuming.

Moreover, the temporary provisions further complicate an already overly-complex federal tax code. If the death tax were permanently repealed, resources currently allocated to estate planning would be reinvested into improving and expanding the business, thus creating and shoring up job opportunities and providing a much-needed boost to each of our states' local economies.

Permanent repeal of the death tax is critically important to the future of our country's family businesses, farms and ranches, and, most importantly, to the people they employ. We request your support to ensure that this much-needed tax relief is permanently locked into place.

Sincerely,

Mr. Vincent Insalaco
Family Entertainment
North Little Rock, AR

Mr. Madison Murphy
Murphy Family Management
El Dorado, AR
And:
Hard Bargain Farms
Epps, LA

Ms. Melanie Meyer
Versai Inc.
New Orleans, LA

Mr. James J. Conway III
TitleServ, Inc.
Long Island, NY

Mr. Lowell Miles
Miles Fiberglass and Composites
Portland, OR

Mr. Richard Inukai
Dick's Country Dodge and McKenzie Ford
Hillsboro, OR

Mr. David Slyman
Backstreet Development
Seven Hills, OH

Mr. Robert & Mark Bitz
Plainville Farms
Plainville, NY

Mr. Tom Goebel
Lakefront Lines, Inc.
Cleveland, OH

Mr. Gus Payne
Arlington University
New Orleans, LA

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They Still Blame America First

The Democrats fall into the national security trap again. BY FRED BARNES

DEMOCRATS don't have a death wish. It just seems that way. What they actually have is a habit of falling into the national security trap. They did it in 1972. They did it in 1984. They did it in 1994. They did it in 2002. And they're doing it again this year as they prepare for the 2006 midterm elections, in which they hope to produce a breakthrough as sweeping and decisive as Republicans achieved in 1994.

The national security trap is simple. When faced with a choice between supporting or criticizing the use of military force along with a strong national security policy, Democrats often side with the critics. Which is how they fall into the trap, which leads to electoral defeat. When they back a vigorous defense of America's national security, however, the opposite happens. They usually win. Even when Democrats merely neutralize the national security issue—this happened in 1996 and 1998—or the issue is peripheral, they stand a good chance of winning.

At the moment, Democrats are convinced the country has turned against the war in Iraq. So House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi is quite comfortable declaring the war a "grotesque mistake" and boasting that she has thought so from the start. Senator Edward Kennedy felt confident enough last week to inform American generals home from Iraq that the war is an "intractable quagmire." This prompted a sharp rebuke from General George Casey, the top commander in Iraq. "You have an insurgency with no vision, no base, limited popular support, an elected government, committed Iraqis to the democratic process, and you have Iraqi security forces that are fighting and dying for their country every day," Casey said. "Senator, that is not a quagmire."

Kennedy lost that exchange. And Democrats did no better on a related issue, the treatment of terrorists imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay. Senate Democratic whip Dick Durbin was forced to apologize for likening the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay to that of the Soviet gulag, Hitler's death camps, and the Cambodian killing fields. What was striking was the matter-of-fact manner in which Durbin drew the parallel in the first place. He seemed to be oblivious to the possibility he might be seen as worrying more about the detainees than about America's national security.

Democrats haven't learned the lesson on national security from elections over the past 30-plus years. In 1972, Democrats thought the public had turned strongly against the war in Vietnam. So they nominated a fervent antiwar candidate, George McGovern. He lost in a landslide to incumbent Richard Nixon. Granted, McGovern's stance on national security wasn't the only factor in his loss, but it played a part. In 1980, Ronald Reagan ousted Jimmy Carter at least partly because he took a tougher position toward the Soviet Union and Iran. Four years later, Democratic candidates spent the primaries arguing over who had endorsed the nuclear freeze first. Reagan won reelection easily.

In 1988, the elder George Bush won after Democrat Michael Dukakis undermined his own credibility as a potential commander in chief by riding in a tank wearing silly-looking headgear. But in 1992, things were different. Bill Clinton and Al Gore avoided the national security trap. Clinton was hawkish toward China (later he mellowed) and Gore had voted for the Gulf war as a senator in 1991. They won. In 1994, after Clinton had responded weakly in Somalia and Haiti, Republicans captured the Senate and the House. Clinton responded strongly in Bosnia in 1995 and won reelection in 1996 and Democrats picked up a few House seats in 1998. In 2000, national security was a secondary issue and Al Gore won the popular vote and Democrats gained 5 Senate seats.

In 2002, Democrats voted 11 times against the creation of a Homeland Security Department, insisting the wishes of federal employee unions be accommodated first. They were pilloried by Republicans, who gained congressional seats. Finally, in 2004, Democrats concluded a majority of voters were anti-Iraq. John Kerry acted accordingly, voting against funds to continue the war. And Democrats spent much of the year attacking Bush also over the conduct of the war on terror. They fell in the trap. Bush was reelected in large part because voters trusted him more than Kerry to keep the country secure.

Democrats are optimistic about the 2006 election and with some reason. The country is in a sour mood. The public may have grown tired of Bush. Democrats believe they can sell the idea Republicans are abusing their power in Congress. But Democrats can't win if they're caught in the national security trap. In an era in which America is threatened by terrorists, voters are unlikely to abandon a party that's muscular on national security for a party that isn't. ♦

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Ballots over Beirut

The Cedar Revolution puts down roots.

BY LEE SMITH

Beirut

AFTER TWO ROUNDS of parliamentary elections with little competition between candidates and consequently very low voter turnout, the third round of the Lebanese political season featured a vigorous battle between General Michel Aoun, just returned from almost 15 years of exile in Paris, and a coalition including Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, Saad Hariri, son of the assassinated former prime minister, and the Lebanese Forces, a Christian party. Aoun trounced his competitors, and surprised even himself by winning 21 seats (out of 128) in Lebanon's first post-Syrian occupation government. The general's poor showing in the fourth and final round last week can hardly obscure the fact that his bloc constitutes an opposition power center, one that the more established political players—including Hariri's group, Jumblatt, Hezbollah, and Amal (the Shiite militia)—will now have to reckon with. Aoun's hard-won seats are a tangible sign that democracy really is taking root in this country.

I met with Aoun shortly after his third-week victories in his villa in Rabieh, a town high in the mountains about 30 minutes north of Beirut. He is a robust and energetic 70 years, and smaller than the televised image of the man who took on the Syrian army 15 years ago and is now embarked on the equally daunting, and perhaps thankless, task of reconfiguring postwar Lebanon's political culture.

"Our democracy is very primitive," Aoun says. "It's the worst form of democracy—no laws are implemented, a bad electoral law, there's no separation between powers. I want to modernize this democracy." He's just finished lunch, and I ask him if his headstrong approach is why he's being portrayed as a divisive figure, someone who's driving a wedge into the national unity engendered by the "Cedar Revolution."

"Whoa!" he says, his eyes widening behind his narrow glass frames. He seems almost wounded by the question, a strange reaction for a political figure whose often aggressive rhetoric, anticorruption crusade, and impatience with the local press is reminiscent of former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Among Aoun's first words upon his May 7 return from exile in France was a request for the assembled press corps to "shut up." However, as with Giuliani, few people doubt his integrity.

Aoun hands me a pamphlet, "The Alternative," detailing the reform initiatives of his party, the Free Patriotic Movement. They cover such areas as public education, the environment, independence of the judiciary, freedom of speech and assembly. These are all the subjects Arab liberals agree need to be tackled across the region but will rarely discuss openly, never mind publish. Aoun boasts that "this is the first time a Lebanese political party has presented a written program, not just verbal promises. We have to fulfill it."

Aoun's camp is staffed mostly by volunteers, some of them wearing orange, his party's color, and the "new black" of democracy movements across the world. It's clear that the general's energy and forthrightness have inspired large parts of a community accustomed to double-dealing, and multiple discourses (depending on which confessional community is being addressed—or targeted). To his supporters, Aoun signals a break with that kind of local, even tribal, leadership. Says American University of Beirut professor Farid al-Khazen, a newly elected deputy who ran on Aoun's list: "He's a Christian who has large popularity within the Muslim community, and his political discourse is very much national in focus."

"I'm aware of what I represent for Lebanese people of all confessions," Aoun says. "I'm a guy who looks out for the interests of his country, and after 15 years of exile is still popular. The Lebanese look at me as a unique figure in their history. Or, that's what I hear from them," he says somewhat self-consciously after skipping a beat. "I don't say that about me—you can ask them."

One of Aoun's press aides, an attractive young woman in her early 30s, nods cheerfully. She and many of Aoun's supporters say they were first inspired by the general back in the late '80s when he took on Syria and challenged the U.S.-led international order that had handed the country over to the Assad regime. During his exile, while his supporters were regularly harassed and jailed by the security services, Aoun lobbied Western governments to get Syria out of Lebanon. He was a driving force behind both the September 2004 U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, and the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act passed by Congress in 2003. Still, it was only after September 11 that Aoun began to get a hearing in Washington with a series of speeches that echoed the Bush administration's new talking-points: The connection between authoritarian regimes and terrorism, zero tolerance for dictatorships, especially Syria's, and the need for democracy in the Middle East, which Lebanon had historically, and uniquely, represented in the region.

During the war years, Aoun's belief in the sovereignty of the Lebanese nation led him to oppose the Lebanese

Lee Smith is writing a book on Arab culture.

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Michel Aoun

AFP / Joseph Barrak

Forces, at the time a powerful Christian militia that had essentially established a state within a state. If that confrontation opened wounds in the Christian community that still haven't entirely healed, it also fortified Aoun's credentials as a nonsectarian leader. He believes that Lebanon will eventually embrace secularism in government but, he explains, it will not be imposed from above, as in Syria, but will rather come from the ground up. Aoun sees it happening, perhaps overoptimistically, within the next 10 to 15 years.

In the meantime, confessionalism remains the basis of Lebanon's politics, and the key to its elections. The parliament's 128 seats are divided evenly between Muslims and Christians, and further subdivided among sects, including Maronite Christian, Shiite Muslim, Sunni Muslim, Druze, and others. Perhaps it is because the electoral reality is so complex that many observers, Western and local, tended to reduce the recent campaign to a contest between the anti-Syria coalition and its opponents, who have been unfairly painted as pro-Syrian, including, bizarrely enough, Aoun himself.

In the early spring, shortly after the assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri, most of the country rallied behind its "opposition" leaders, perhaps most famously Walid Jumblatt, the Druze chieftain whose personal courage in taking a stand against the Syrian occupation helped galvanize international attention. But Jumblatt is a less than pristine figure. Indeed, everyone who held political power in Lebanon over the last 15 years was seriously compromised by the Syrian presence—even Hariri, the man now regarded as the signal martyr of the "independence intifada." After all, Hariri was prime minister during the bulk of the occupation.

The fact is that some figures in the anti-Syria group jumped the Damascus leash before others, and some never jumped at all. During the elections, Jumblatt and Saad Hariri, the late Rafik's son, allied themselves with Hezbollah, the Shiite Islamist group still under Syrian tutelage.

It is unclear, then, how this grouping could be described precisely as being the anti-Syria opposition, or Aoun as pro-Syrian. Aoun, for his part, made common cause with several politicians who had profited handsomely from Syrian control, but he is hardly, as Jumblatt describes him, a "little Syrian tool."

"This was all propaganda," says Khazen. "As though people voted in favor of a pro-Syrian figure. The Western media was as responsible as the Lebanese media for spreading this nonsense. For the voters this was a nonissue. Syria had no role, no agenda, no candidates."

Still, Syria will continue to have an interest in Lebanon, as will other states, including France, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. The Lebanese are accustomed to the fact that foreign powers will always play a role in this small country, but those interests with any luck will now begin to be articulated through legitimate bilateral relationships, not political assassinations. And it is up to Lebanese officials to leverage those interests in order to serve Lebanon.

After a 30-year hiatus, the Arab world's original democracy is practicing real politics—deal-making, coalition-building, horse-trading. Of course, after so long under the gun, the Lebanese are entitled to expect something more than just politics. The national unity on display after the assassination of Rafik Hariri was a useful narrative. It galvanized both the Lebanese and an international community that looked on with sympathy and admiration for a country where Christians and Muslims marched together peacefully to determine their own political future. "People have a lot invested in the idea of national unity," says Lebanese analyst Elie Fawaz. "But the fact is that the Lebanese have unequivocally expressed that they are unified in their opposition to violence as a means of settling political issues."

Simply because Muslims and Christians don't march hand in hand every day doesn't mean that civil war is in the offing. The test of a democracy is not how much people agree on the same things, but how much space is given for debate and the contest of competing interests. To put it another way, as Aoun told me, "Lebanon's national unity, democracy, is expressed through a diversity of opinion." As with national unity, many Lebanese have had overly high expectations of Aoun, first when he took on Syria and again now. He's neither the country's savior nor its sole liberator; rather, he's an important, indeed singular, element in Lebanon's renascent democracy. ♦

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What's the Matter with Gitmo?

Detention, torture, and other illiberal things

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

Although Patrick Leahy stopped short of calling for the closure of the counterterrorism prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in a June 15 Senate hearing on detainees in the war on terrorism, the Vermont Democrat certainly expressed views that now dominate his party and the liberal media. Those views are shared by increasing numbers on the right, who feel queasy about indefinite detentions, secret, unmonitored Central Intelligence Agency prison facilities, and the policy of rendition, whereby the U.S. government turns over terrorists and suspected terrorists to foreign governments for "aggressive interrogation." Given the breathtaking historical illiteracy of Democratic senator Richard Durbin, who had no difficulty juxtaposing Hitler's death camps with Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, and Democratic congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, who thought Republican objections to Durbin's remarks were just politically motivated, it's not hard to sympathize with the military and civilian leadership of the Pentagon who have obviously been annoyed by all the criticism.

And much of what has been said, even by thoughtful critics of Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and the secret CIA prison facilities—on how they have aided our enemies and damaged us in the Middle East—is dubious. But the attacks on the Pentagon and the CIA are not without merit. It is clear the Bush administration hasn't thought through what it's doing in these prison facilities. It hasn't yet appreciated the fact that its mishandling of this issue could seriously damage America's resolve against Islamic terrorism. More important, the administration's continuing ineptitude four years after 9/11 will surely make it more difficult for the country to remember why it must persevere in Iraq and in the democratic transformation of the Middle East.

Reuel Marc Gerecht is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

"The net effect of all these problems," warned Leahy,

> is that Guantanamo has not made our country safer. It is increasingly clear that the administration's policies have seriously damaged our reputation in the world and that they are making us less safe. The stain of Guantanamo has become the primary recruiting tool for our enemies. President Bush often speaks of spreading democratic values across the Middle East, but Guantanamo is not a reflection of the values that he encourages other nations to adopt. The United States has often criticized other nations for operating secret prisons, where detainees are hidden away and denied any meaningful opportunity to contest their detention. Now we have our own such prisons. Even if the administration fails to see the hypocrisy in this situation, the rest of the world does not.

Now, some of the concerns the senator expressed do demand the attention of the administration; and to those, we will return in a moment. But first, let us look at the belief, which is now in many corners a firm conviction, that Guantanamo has degraded our security and become a recruiting tool for our enemies. It is impossible to talk sensibly about Guantanamo and other prisons unless we can assess these claims empirically. Secret CIA interrogation centers are undoubtedly a moral, political, foreign-policy, and intelligence problem for the United States. And it's a decent bet that the distribution of information from terrorist interrogations at these facilities has been insufficient to allow anyone to judge how successful Langley's methods and men have been. But neither the CIA facilities, nor the far more open, regulated, and by most accounts kind Guantanamo jail, are likely to have made us less safe by boosting the recruitment of holy warriors. It's possible that the humiliating image of these prisons is somewhere in the cauldron that makes for death-wish holy warriors. Not enough time has passed to allow us to know for sure one way or the other.

However, it is far more reasonable to suppose, given the history of al Qaeda and of the first generation of holy warriors, that the prison's closure would be seen on Islam-

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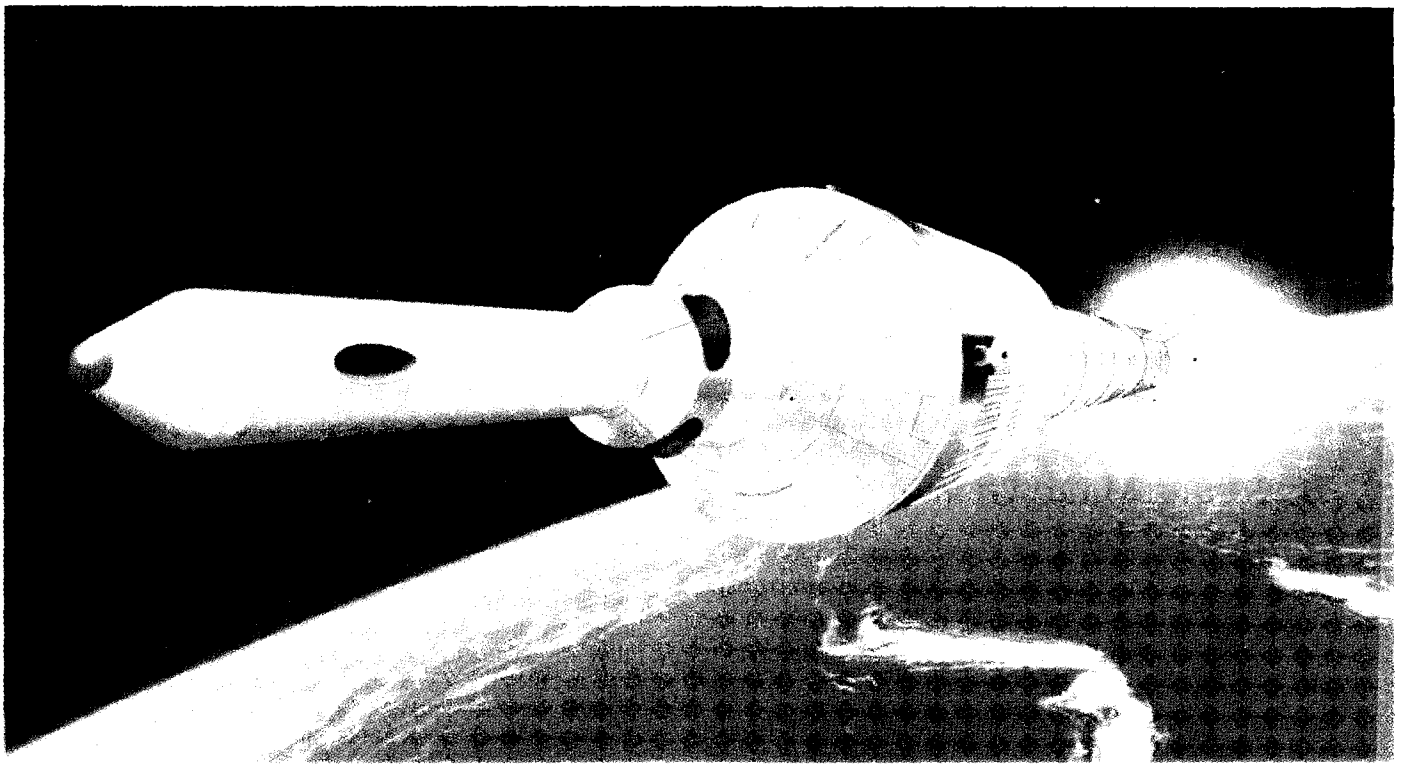

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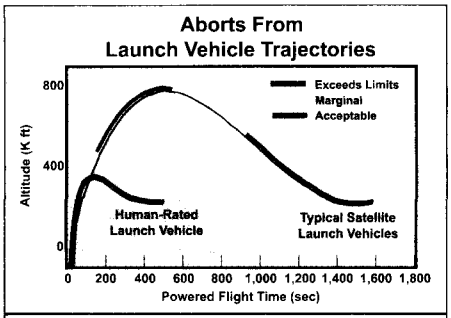

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ic extremist websites—the ones *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman is rightly terrified of—as an enormous boon to militants. Many in the American elite are beginning to revert to a pre-9/11 worldview, where U.S. aggression or "unilateralism," not American weakness or self-doubt, is seen as the fuel for bin Ladenism. Yet this is a reversal of history. It was the fearful U.S. withdrawal from Lebanon in 1984 and from Somalia in 1994, not the original incursions there, that bin Laden saw as proof that determined Muslims could best the United States.

Rabid pan-Arab nationalism died and Islamic fundamentalism grew after the crushing Israeli victory in 1967, but I have not yet seen Muslim holy warriors using the Six Day War as a recruitment banner. Could Israeli prison camps, which the Arab street and press have depicted for decades as degrading and brutal, have helped create the young men and women who became, quite suddenly, the Palestinian suicide bombers of the 21st century? Sure. It's possible. Although one would have thought that such perceived mistreatment, if it had been so provocative for Palestinians, would have provoked suicide-bombers years ago. Much more causative was surely the sense of victory created by Israel's flight from Lebanon in 2000 while diehard Shiite Hezbollah militants continued killing Israeli soldiers. That hasty and ill-planned withdrawal from Lebanon was seen at the time by most Western observers as sensible, destined to improve Israel's standing with the Arabs, and the Palestinians in particular. Yasser Arafat and friends, however, smelled fatigue, preached holy war, and unleashed hell. What is noteworthy about the Guantanamo Koran controversy (other than the pleading and defensive way Pentagon spokesmen initially responded to the affair) is how few protests there were in the Greater Middle East, and how palpably the protests that drew attention, in Afghanistan, were the product of Taliban-sympathetic, antigovernment Pashtun forces.

The decisive, defining event for Islamic holy warriors today is the Sunni-led insurgency in Iraq. And the defining psychological factor of that struggle is the open question of whether the Americans will endure. If we do not do so—and it is becoming ever more worrisome that the Democratic party in the main does not share the staunch determination of Joseph Biden, Joseph Lieberman, and Hillary Clinton to win—then we will surely give birth to a radical Sunni movement more inspired, vicious, and seductive than was al Qaeda in the early 1990s, after the Red Army's retreat from Afghanistan and the collapse of the Soviet empire. If we win in Iraq, however, the prisons of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo will remain vivid memories for the United States—and, with regard to any vile and cowardly practices of sexual intimidation in either prison, shameful ones. But for the jihadists and the jihadist-wannabes, those two places will simply become part of the depressing, awful, and awesome story of democracy's triumph in the Middle East. For some militants, democratic Iraq may become a recruitment poster for holy war against the United States. We should welcome such a tocsin call, of course, and see how many recruits al Qaeda can generate as Muslims increasingly vote.

And concerning democracy, there is no more prideful, America-centric, liberal reflex than to believe that the United States must be virtuous—more virtuous than, say, France—for democracy to spread. From columnists, newspaper editors, congressmen, senators, and especially our European "allies," who've mostly disparaged the project of expanding representative government in the Muslim world, we hear lectures about how our moral failings compromise democracy's chances and appeal. But the chief sense in which this is true is the one President Bush acknowledged in his revolutionary speech at the National Endowment for Democracy in November 2003—the speech where he confessed that "sixty years of Western nations' excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe."

From Casablanca to Tashkent, Muslims have lived under dictatorship for decades. Many of these Muslims, from the most liberal secularist to the most traditional believer, dislike, even hate, the United States for real and imaginary reasons. But probably the most concrete cause for their animosity has been America's reflexive support of the rulers above them—the men American presidents until George W. Bush have called "our friends." First the Cold War, then the "realist" mania for stability and Saudi oil and the liberal fear of anti-female, anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic, and anti-American Islamic militants' gaining power through the ballot box, froze America behind increasingly detested autocrats. Even before the coming of George W. Bush and the liberation of Afghanistan and Iraq, however, democratic aspirations were gaining ground among intellectuals and ordinary people.

Although a commendable sense of liberal guilt is undoubtedly behind the quick assertions suggesting America's behavior at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo has damaged the cause of democracy, this conclusion is in fact insulting to Muslims who've watched their countries become ever uglier since World War II. It ignores 200 years of history in which Muslims swallowed, often enthusiastically, dictatorial ideologies and learned the dark side of the modern centralized state. Shiite Muslims in Iraq and especially their religious brethren in Iran have openly striven for democracy. They have not done so

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Peter Steiner

because they necessarily admire or wish to emulate the United States. They want to try democracy overwhelmingly for reasons unconnected to America. The leftist "red mullah" hard core among Iran's revolutionary clergy—who once hated the United States as viscerally as any Sunni jihadist in al Qaeda, and still often reflexively recoil from any "pro-American" thought—have irreversibly if imperfectly embraced the idea of democracy because their own former *Weltanschauung* has collapsed as clerical rule has failed. Philosophically and politically, they have nowhere else to go. Nor do Sunni Muslims have a special anti-American gene that overrides their own self-interest. Like Shiite Muslims, they've seen the pursuit of happiness—probably the most powerful of all American exports—vanish as their own dictatorships grew more entrenched, wealthy, and dynastic. It's a good guess the democratic opposition in Egypt—which now ranges from liberal secularists to the Muslim Brotherhood—would gladly live with the "hypocrisy" of our prison camps in exchange for the United States ending its support of President Hosni Mubarak's regime.

We can only hope that prominent Democratic senators and liberal columnists will be ready to say about American aid to Cairo, after Mubarak cheats in the upcoming presidential elections, "Just shut it down." The generation of bin Ladenism is specifically connected to dictatorship in Egypt, where the regime's convoluted double game of simultaneously supporting and suppressing Islamic fundamentalism has succeeded in gutting what was once the most vibrant, talented, and hopeful society in the Muslim Middle East. The U.S. policy of rendition undermines the cause of democracy in Egypt even as it binds us to the regime's most benighted side. Unintentionally but quite perversely, the current liberal outcry against Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo could well increase the use of rendition, a bipartisan policy dating to the mid-1990s, which the congressional intelligence committees, both Republican and Democratic members, whether they admit it publicly or not, have blessed. For a Bush administration under siege, rendition may well seem a safer, quieter way of doing what the CIA and the military deem necessary.

The administration can, of course, avoid this trap. It always takes time to develop effective tactics against determined enemies. And the war against Islamic holy warriors—which in practice, as President Bush clearly understands, is a battle also against the failed political systems that spawn them—presents unusual challenges. Stateless warriors who live to kill civilians defy the morality and legal conventions the West has advanced to mitigate human conflict. With that said, the administration has needlessly jeopardized its own moral standing in the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo debates because of its fondness for secrecy and its general inability to articulate well its developing strategy and tactics for arresting and detaining young Muslim males it knows or suspects are jihadists. The administration has so far not convincingly explained why it put a counterterrorist prison in Cuba and why it allowed secret CIA detention facilities to sprout up overseas that are not directly tied to frontline combat opera-

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tions. It is very hard not to conclude that those facilities are where they are because the Bush administration wanted them located where outside observation, access, and protests could be easily denied or controlled.

Guantanamo really ought to be in Leavenworth, and the CIA's counterterrorist interrogation centers that don't pertain to the tactical requirements of ongoing joint operations with U.S. Special Forces ought to be at "the Farm," the espionage training facility in the swamplands of Virginia. (Training city-based spooks in this environment has always been bizarre; incarcerating jihadists among so much greenery has a certain poetic appropriateness.)

The first and most important rule for terrorist detention should be: Do nothing overseas that we would be embarrassed to do on U.S. soil. If the war with Nazi Germany had been a 30-year struggle, we would have kept German soldiers in prison until they were old and gray. We may well do this with some of the Islamic "enemy combatants" we've got locked up in our counterterrorist prisons. So be it. If we cannot repatriate detainees to their homelands after we've exhausted their intelligence value because we fear their home countries will allow them to rejoin jihadist groups, lock them up for 10 years till their testosterone drops, and then revisit the question. Frontline holy warriors over the age of 40 are few and far between.

The Pentagon and the CIA should admit, however, that their intelligence officers can *regularly* make mistakes in their interrogations and debriefings. Interrogation is an art, not a science. Even in the best of hands, judgments can always remain uncomfortably subjective. We should be honest and say that we don't always have the best of hands doing the questioning. I have spoken to two European intelligence officials who have participated in interrogations at Guantanamo. Each of these men is linguistically and educationally what you would want in an intelligence official targeted against jihadists. Both came away from Guantanamo with the same impression: Most of the American interrogators they observed were ill-versed in their subject matter. This is not surprising, since radical Islam was uncharted territory for virtually everyone in the U.S. government before 9/11. It is, however, a shortcoming to be acknowledged.

Almost all of the American interrogators my informants observed required the assistance of interpreters. Rarely did the interrogations proceed in a rigorous manner, with details of detainees' personal histories or local attachments skillfully exploited, and digressions pursued, aggressively or kindly, to trigger the process of confession. These Europeans found the Americans too considerate in their efforts, allowing their subjects too much breathing space. The all-critical mission of surrounding detainees with disorienting loneliness didn't seem to be a primary objective. They did not, by the way, find the routines observed to be physically abusive. Indeed, one of the European intelligence officials, who comes from a country where physical pain is not an unknown tool in terrorist debriefings, thought the Americans were not using *enough* physical duress in their efforts, and were certainly not marrying well coercive methods with strictly mental seduction and intimidation. European hubris aside, the critiques of these observers are probably not far off the mark.

One conclusion, then: We are all always rightly concerned about the operational morality of America's intelligence agencies; we should probably be more concerned about their competence. It's not at all unlikely that however much military and CIA officers have had recourse to physical intimidation and pain in their interrogations, this choice is probably more common more quickly among officers who don't have the necessary background and linguistic skills to deconstruct effectively their detainees through mental seduction, intimidation, and fatigue.

Has the Pentagon or the CIA introduced standard procedures to review the quality of the product of its interrogations—or even to listen to the tapes of those interrogations? Has it developed performance reviews for its interrogators? It's a good bet that neither the Senate and House intelligence oversight committees, nor the senior reaches of the administration, have any firm idea of who the interrogators are at the secret CIA facilities, or their preferred methods. It's now almost four years after 9/11. How many case officers fluent in Arabic and with an educational background sufficient to allow them to go head to head against reasonably well-educated jihadists have we actually drafted into service as full-time interrogators? These individuals are perhaps the most important operatives today in the war on terror. How often are these men and women rotated out? Too rapid rotation and the consequent loss of experience has been a constant problem for Agency officers in Afghanistan and Iraq. It's a decent bet the same problem exists among the counterterrorist officers who are interrogating the jihadist elite and hoi polloi.

The devil is in the details, and a trusting attitude within and outside Langley and the Pentagon does no one any good. Throughout the Cold War, the CIA was plagued with translation problems. Not infrequently the CIA allowed officers who were not linguistically or educationally up to snuff to handle important cases where greater precision and sophistication should have been deployed. This problem cropped up repeatedly in the 1980s and 1990s against the Iranians, when they were America's

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most challenging terrorist enemy. Perhaps this has all changed at the secret interrogation sites; maybe an institution that was routinely a bit sloppy has become more serious, now that case officers live in more serious times. Active-duty CIA officers to whom I've spoken since 9/11, however, give the impression that the organization still is too loose in its assignment of officers to critical counterterrorist tasks. And remember, the CIA has generally been more rigorous in its professional standards than its military counterparts. Operational sloppiness, of course, spills over into sloppiness about ethics.

The administration understandably does not want to introduce a judicial review process run by civilian courts into the detention and interrogation of Islamic holy warriors—doing so could easily turn the war against jihadists into a set of criminal proceedings, which is exactly what happened under the Clinton administration. This would inevitably have a deterrent effect on our actions overseas, which may well be what the cleverer antiwar Democratic critics of the administration have in mind. But the Bush administration certainly needs to have somebody—someone not employed by the CIA or Pentagon—review the intelligence officials' judgments on enemy combatants.

According to Senator Leahy, he "urged President Bush to work with Congress to fashion appropriate rules and procedures for detaining and punishing suspected terrorists" as long ago as October 2001. Pennsylvania's Republican senator Arlen Specter apparently did the same. The administration was unwise to reject their offers. Historically, Congress has had an essential moral and legal role in determining how America fights its wars. The Bush administration should have welcomed Congress as a partner in this battle against Islamic terrorism, making sure this war was America's commitment, not a Republican president's. Even now, the administration should encourage Congress's intelligence oversight committees to establish staffs assigned to review the circumstances of detention—the who, what, when, where, and why of enemy-combatant designations. The Combatant Status Review Tribunals, which the Defense Department implemented after a series of court cases in the last year led to questions about the adequacy of the Pentagon's procedures, have been doing this at Guantanamo and are well and good. But civilian overseers also have a job to do. Let them review the debriefings and information coming from foreign intelligence services that have allowed the CIA and the Pentagon's intelligence agencies to conclude we've got holy warriors in custody. Challenge the oversight committees to approve all interrogation tactics that the U.S. government is using against terrorists and suspected terrorists.

If the CIA believes it's necessary to "water-board" a chief al Qaeda operative who may have information about a devastating terrorist strike, then the administration should make the case before Congress, or at least before the intelligence oversight committees, that simulated drowning is morally and operationally justified. It should have done this prospectively, starting in September 2001, since the CIA must have the right to respond immediately, without lengthy outside review, to captured jihadists who may have information about a terrorist strike. The administration should also consider challenging Congress to make membership in several Islamic extremist groups punishable by death or life imprisonment. If the administration intends ever to try senior members of al Qaeda for terrorism, war crimes, or whatever, then it ought to clarify beforehand with Congress the laws that would allow American intelligence officers to interrogate these men aggressively, as well as the laws under which they could be convicted. And if that is an insurmountable hurdle—which it may well be—then the administration should obviously be exceedingly selective with its rougher interrogations. It would be a pity to catch Ayman al Zawahiri, al Qaeda's brainy number two, and have his conviction overturned because we'd "water-boarded" him.

The administration should demand of itself very high intelligence standards for ascertaining whether someone belongs to al Qaeda, or Algeria's vicious and al Qaeda-aligned Armed Islamic Group, or just the often intellectually ugly but nonlethal Tabligh fundamentalist movement. This could be excruciatingly difficult, as deadly Islamic holy warriors and nonlethal Islamic militants can look almost the same. And foreign intelligence and security services, on which the CIA has been increasingly dependent since 9/11, may not be sticklers for parsing the differences among militant Islamic groups. Rarely will we be so fortunate as to collide with card-carrying members of Osama bin Laden's organization.

The Bush administration should minimize the possible intrusion of the courts into the strategy and tactics of the war on terror and enlist Congress's help in setting up the institutions and procedures that will make the system more accountable to more of the people's elected representatives. If the White House doesn't cut its losses and move firmly in this democratic direction, it risks further undermining essential congressional and popular support for the counterinsurgency in Iraq and the all-important cause of politically transforming the Middle East. However valuable the administration may think Guantanamo Bay and the CIA's secret facilities are in the war on terror, they are sideshows to what is transpiring in Iraq, and what, in the wake of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's remarkable visit, may soon transpire in Egypt. ♦

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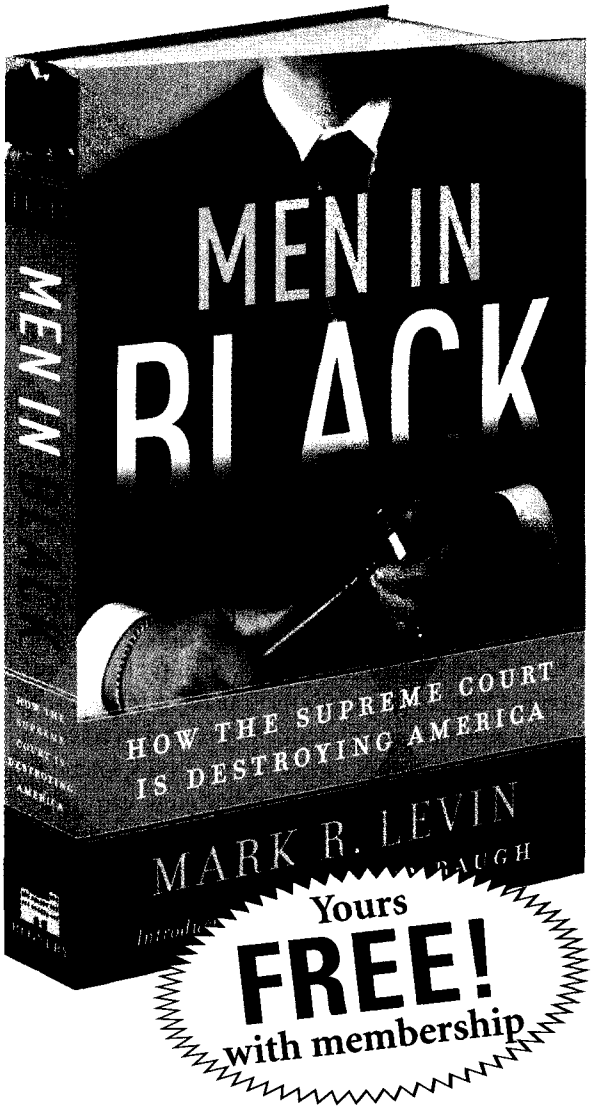

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George Washington's first cabinet. Thomas Jefferson, second from right.

CORBIS

Founders' Keepers

Washington and Jefferson, in brief By Gordon S. Wood

Can books get much smaller and shorter? We all know that attention spans are dwindling, but can a book about the life of a famous person be too brief? Is there no end to publishers' putting out ever tinier biographies of prominent historical figures? The latest series of this sort is Eminent Lives by Atlas Books published in collaboration with HarperCollins. The idea behind this series is to have celebrated writers with strong sensibilities and sharp points of view take on notable persons in the past whom they especially admire and then hope that something exciting results.

It's a tricky business having nonexperts write about famous individuals who have been studied to death by generations of biographers and historians. Presumably the non-experts bring something—freshness of perspective and passion, perhaps—to tired and overworked subjects; but being nonexperts, they also run the risk of making so many mistakes that the credibility of their account is brought into question. Does this imaginative publishing scheme work in these two brief biographies of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson?

George Washington
The Founding Father
by Paul Johnson
HarperCollins, 126 pp., $19.95

Thomas Jefferson
Author of America
by Christopher Hitchens
HarperCollins, 208 pp., $19.95

Paul Johnson is certainly a writer with a strong sensibility and a sharp point of view. In terms of history writing he is a veritable polymath, with books on subjects as varied as a history of the Renaissance and a history of the Jews. He has chosen for his eminent life George Washington, who, he says, "was one of the most important figures in world history." But Washington is not a person easily understood. Despite leaving papers that "constitute the most complete record of a life in the entire 18th century," Washington, Johnson writes, "remains a remote and

Gordon S. Wood is the Alva O. Way university professor and professor of history at Brown, and the author, most recently, of The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin.

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mysterious figure." He was puzzling to his contemporaries and "he puzzles us. No man's mind is so hard to enter and dwell within. Everyone agreed, and agrees," he writes, that Washington "was a paragon. But," says Johnson, posing rather stark alternatives, "a rich or an empty one? A titan of flesh and blood or a clockwork figure programmed to do wisely?"

Naturally, Johnson finds Washington to be a rich, flesh-and-blood human paragon. Yet in the end he isn't quite able to enter the mind of this ambitious Virginia planter and explain how a man who seems to have no special talents emerged as one of the greatest men in the world. Washington never attended college and was never regarded by anyone as intellectually gifted. His initial forays into the West as a Virginia militia colonel in the 1750s were disasters; indeed, by himself he helped precipitate the Seven Years War between Britain and France. As commander in chief of the American Continental Army during the Revolution he lost most of his battles; for his victory at Yorktown, French aid was crucial.

Yet by the 1780s he had emerged as a world-famous man—all because of his willingness to retire completely from public life. All successful generals in recent British history—Cromwell, Marlborough—had sought political rewards commensurate with their military achievements. Washington's willingness to give up power made him at once an unprecedented kind of hero—famous worldwide for his character. Reluctantly, he risked that fame to help create a new Constitution for the United States and, as president in the 1790s, to put the new government on its feet and bind the fledgling Union together. Unlike the other Revolutionary leaders from the South, he even managed upon his death to set forth a plan for the freeing of his slaves.

With only 30,000 words or so to work with, the authors of these little biographies should not want to waste any. But unfortunately Johnson does. He repeats himself several times, telling us more than once that George III never left Britain and never saw the sea until he was 34, and doing the same with the story of Washington addressing his officers at Newburgh in 1783, fumbling with his glasses and telling them that he had grown nearly blind in service to his country. Such repetitions are nothing, however, compared with Johnson's many mistakes and unreliable statements, which suggest that the book was hastily written and poorly edited and vetted.

Johnson says that the royal Proclamation of 1763, which forbade white settlement west of the Appalachians, was Washington's "fundamental reason for resisting Britain," when actually Washington never took the Proclamation seriously at all. When Johnson refers to "the Articles of Association, 1775-6, precursor of the U.S. Constitution," he conflates the Association of 1774, by which the Continental Congress authorized local enforcement of nonimportation of British goods, with the Articles of Confederation, approved by the Congress in 1777 but not ratified until 1781.

"Nowhere did slaves outnumber whites," Johnson writes, and not until the invention of the cotton gin did "the South as a whole" become "hopelessly enmeshed" in slavery. Alas, well before the invention of the cotton gin, one-fifth of America's population was enslaved, most of them in the South, with 60 percent of South Carolina's population already composed of African slaves. Johnson says that Washington thought slavery was "morally wrong" from the outset, when in fact Washington initially objected to slavery on the grounds that it was inefficient and only gradually came to believe it was immoral as well.

Johnson implies that Washington—"a strategist of genius"—understood from the outset that he should use Fabian tactics in waging war against the British, when actually it took awhile for Washington to comprehend how he should fight. Johnson says that the British people, apart from the king, "had no emotional commitment to the war" and that the "war made virtually no impact on the letters, literature, and even newspapers of the time." This would be news to all those Londoners who experienced the destruction of the Gordon rioters of 1780. In addition to anti-Catholic militants, the Gordon protesters, who eventually constituted a London mob four miles long, were made up of tens of thousands of pro-American supporters. Because by 1783 "Washington had traveled wider [in America] than any nonpreacher," Johnson calls him "the first secular American," forgetting about the extensive prewar travels of deputy postmaster Benjamin Franklin.

Johnson attributes great influence to Alexander Hamilton in the Philadelphia Convention of 1787—making him the author of the Electoral College, for example—when in fact Hamilton's influence was confined to before and after the Convention. He even turns Hamilton as Treasury secretary into someone who could have gone without his salary because "he was rich and did not need the money," when actually Hamilton was always strapped for funds and had to leave office in 1795 to go back to Wall Street to practice law. Johnson says "the all-important objective" of Hamilton's financial program "was to get rid of the debt once and for all," when in fact all Hamilton wanted to do was consolidate the various debts, fund them, and turn the unified national debt into a more or less permanent source of economic productivity. Johnson claims that it was during Washington's presidency "that America achieved takeoff into self-sustaining industrial growth," when most economic historians would say that takeoff into "industrial" growth came many decades later. He has Jefferson resigning as secretary of state because of the Genet affair when, in fact, Jefferson had informed Washington of his intention to retire well before the French minister Genet arrived in America. After Washington suppressed the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, writes Johnson, "it was never necessary, in his lifetime or for long after, for internal defiance of the constitutional law to be put down by federal force." He has forgotten Fries' Rebellion of 1799.

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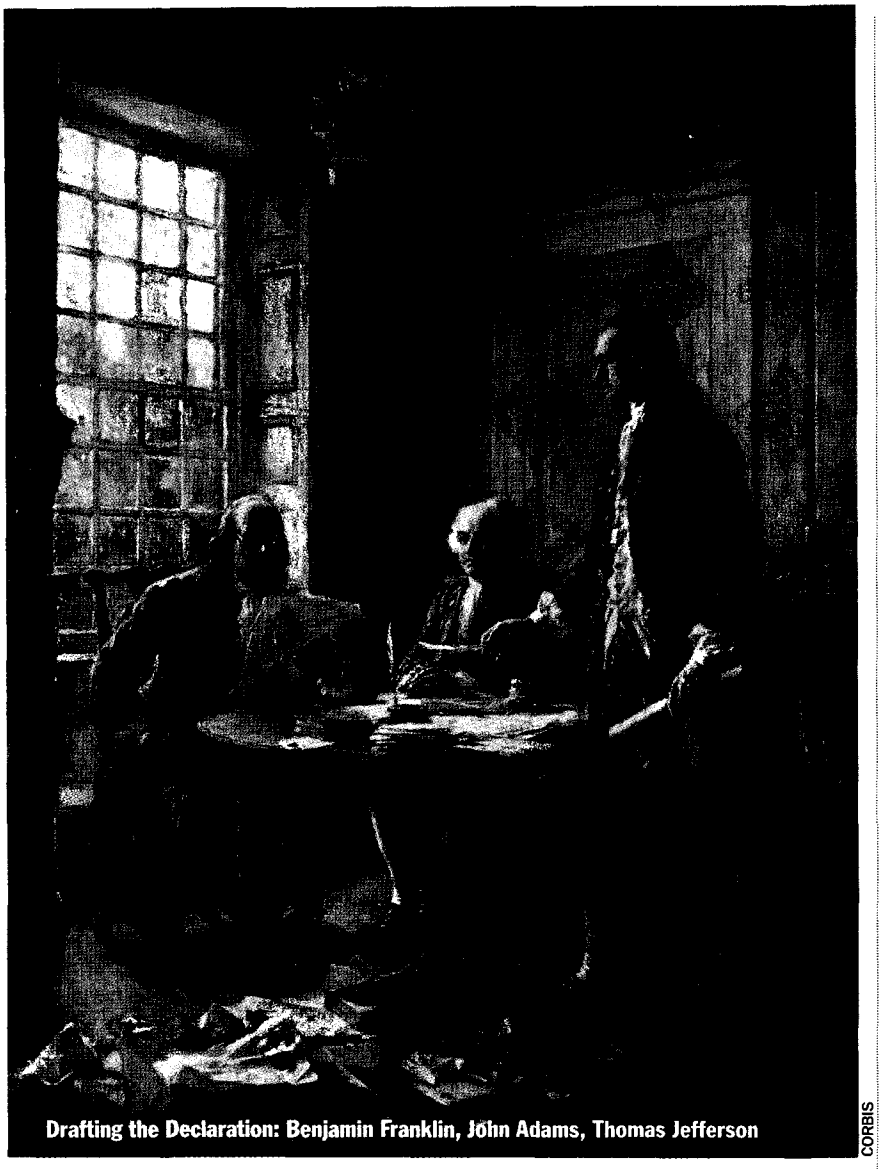

Drafting the Declaration: Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson

CORBIS

So it goes. One or two serious errors might be forgivable, but with so many mistakes and exaggerated statements the reader's confidence in the reliability of the biography is undermined. If one wants to read a very brief but dependable biography of Washington, read Marcus Cunliffe's little gem.

Christopher Hitchens's little biography of Thomas Jefferson is very different and probably what the series editor James Atlas ideally had in mind. Not only is it reliable, but it is interesting and insightful (and, it must be noted, a third again longer than Johnson's book). It is not that Hitchens has discovered new information about Jefferson—that would scarcely be possible in this scholar-saturated world—but he does offer fresh perspectives and perceptive emphases on many aspects of Jefferson's life.

Instead of trying to recount every event in Jefferson's life, Hitchens focuses on important ones and spends some time on each of them. For instance, he devotes several pages to analyzing Jefferson's radical pamphlet *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774) and his draft of the Declaration of Independence, which, says Hitchens, is the only example in history, "apart from the King James version of the Bible, in which great works and concepts have been fused into poetic prose by the banal processes of a committee." Hitchens also has interesting comments on Jefferson's fascination with Britain's Anglo-Saxon heritage, and he astutely notes Jefferson's repeated use of religious language and imagery in describing revolutions. His lengthy discussion of Jefferson and the Barbary pirates is especially arresting.

Typical of Hitchens's nice touch is his comment that "it is perhaps both heartening and sobering to reflect that, in the contest between Jefferson and Adams in 1796, the electors were offered a choice between the president of the American Philosophical Society and the founder of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and chose both of them."

Hitchens's brief life is not a celebration of Jefferson in the manner of Jefferson's great biographer Dumas Malone; indeed, Hitchens wishes he could, like Jefferson with the Bible, go through Malone's volumes and cut out "all the superfluous, ridiculous and devotional parts," especially those having to do with Malone's exculpatory view of Jefferson and slavery. But neither is Hitchens's book the kind of crude bashing of Jefferson that has become increasingly common among recent historians. Hitchens thinks Jefferson is a great man and, along with Lincoln, the only American whose life requires a biographer "to consider and reconsider the whole idea of the United States *ab initio*." In fact, writes Hitchens, Jefferson is one of the few figures in American history "whose absence simply cannot be imagined: his role in the expansion and definition of the United States is too considerable, even at this distance, to be reduced by the passage of time."

During the last decades of his life Jefferson became parochial and narrow, railing against the North and its nationalizing antislavery tendencies and fervently defending the South and its states' rights protection of slavery. In effect, he gave himself over to "a slave power that he half-abominated."

"This surrender, by a man of the Enlightenment and a man of truly revolutionary and democratic temperament," writes Hitchens, in the final and best line in the book, "is another reminder that history is a tragedy and not a morality tale." ♦

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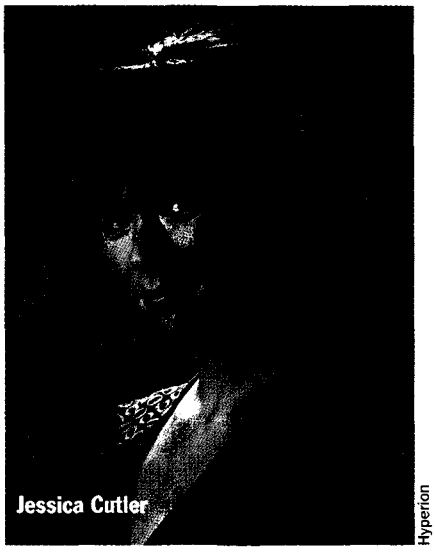
She's Come Undone

Entrepreneur makes good in the nation's capital.

BY JUDY BACHRACH

"How sad is that?" a young female character observes in Jessica Cutler's *roman-à-clef*, after spotting George Stephanopoulos and James Carville across a crowded Palm restaurant. "Those are the biggest celebrities Washington has to offer, and they're not even attractive."

A brief intake of breath here, the kind that always accompanies a rarely uttered truth (a commodity the novel celebrates), and then, just one line down, Cutler does it again. Washington, D.C., her main character points out, is "Hollywood for the Ugly." It's a place of such limited possibilities that "you can't really get famous working on the Hill. Unless you do something really bad." This is a goal Cutler's protagonist, a world-weary babe with Gucci shoes, innovative sexual habits, and a terrible job on Capitol Hill, is clearly gunning for. In fact, two other characters refer to her as a train wreck, although for most of the book, she is too preoccupied to peer down the track.


Jessica Cutler

Hyperion

The Washingtonienne
by Jessica Cutler
Hyperion, 304 pp., $23

Like so many heroines before her, her vision is obscured. After a hot time in New York, she lands, like Gulliver, on a planet dominated by midgets. Nothing about Washington thrills her. The men are pathetic. The drugs even more so, and so difficult to come by that she has to hook up with bike messengers to acquire them. The clothes are dowdy.

Even those in Washington who have managed to achieve some measure of renown, she quickly discovers, are condemned to sort through only the most dispiriting forms of entertainment. "Senators got invited to a lot of lame parties, like receptions in honor of helicopters, and charity balls for revolting diseases I had never heard of," the author complains. "I would have killed myself if I had to go to all those dumb things, even with all the free booze."

In other words, this is a novel of uncommon candor, humor, and perspicacity, and I loved every page of it.

Those familiar with Cutler's short-lived *nom de blog*—in 2004, under the alias Washingtonienne, she chronicled electronically and with a fair degree of self-deprecation her voluminous love life ("S—t, I'm f—ing six guys. Ewwww . . . ")—may recall that on its dissemination in mainstream outlets, Cutler was fired from her *other* job, the one she could actually mention to her parents. Evidently, the office of Senator Mike DeWine, an obviously humorless Republican from Ohio, felt that Cutler couldn't be both a Senate staffer earning $25,000 a year by answering (or in the case of Cutler's alter-ego, not answering) crank letters from constituents and maintain her status as the Samuel Pepys of promiscuity.

But really, why not? It isn't as though these two careers are mutually exclusive. In fact, there was clearly plenty of time, in Cutler's view, to pursue both paths, albeit obviously not with the same degree of zeal. "Do you ever feel like you're not accomplishing anything at all? That's what working on the Hill was like," Cutler writes in her novel. And she should know.

Ever wonder why, when you phone your local congressman, no one, however low-level or clueless, bothers to answer? Cutler's book is full of dialogue that provides useful insights into this problem.

"If you're not taking calls, then I'm not, either," declares one pretty assistant hitting the Call Forward button so she can hash over the previous evening's engagements with an office mate. Another remarks of a perpetually occupied colleague, "Laura is a bicameral slut."

In *Washingtonienne*, congressional staffers do not waste precious flirting time (and here I am using the f-word most euphemistically) in order to compose press releases or analyze the latest Social Security proposal. Mornings are devoted to blogging the high points of the previous night. Afternoons to reruns of *Law & Order* on the office TV set. This very likely is what accounts for the endurance of the Republic.

Cutler's heroine, however, is more entrepreneurial than most, and one of her beaux—she calls him "Fred" and mentions, significantly, he's a great friend of George W. Bush—supplements her meager Hill income to the tune of an extra $20,000 per year. At which point, naturally, the guy morphs into Henry Higgins. This is chronicled in one of the book's more delightful passages.

He was always lecturing me about

Judy Bachrach is a contributing editor of Vanity Fair.

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stuff and counting the number of times that I'd say the word *like* in a sentence. "It makes you sound unintelligent," he told me. "It's a lazy way of talking. People your age need to realize that it's not cool to be lazy." Like, since when? The guy was paying my rent and giving me an allowance for doing absolutely nothing.

Older men loved people my age when they were getting off on our hot young bodies. But then they'd always be so disappointed when they realized that we were so *immature*.

Like, duh, of course I was immature. I was half his age! That's why he was f—ing me instead of his wife, remember?

Yes, that's part of the joy of this novel. The rest stems from figuring out who in this novel is actually Who. Here the author displays a bracing lack of imagination. "I found him chatting up some drunk woman who looked like a goblin up close," Cutler writes of an aging lover who runs into a female network correspondent. "She had a beak of a nose, funny lips, and bad skin. The thick layer of makeup she was wearing did nothing to cover the horrible craters all over her cheeks."

Hmmm . . . Ever sleep with this gal? the heroine wonders. "Noo!" her boyfriend assures her. "Do you know who she's married to?"

Well, yes. I suspect I do. And apparently a former boyfriend named Robert Steinbuch, who works for Senator DeWine, experienced a similar sense of *déjà vu* when he read Cutler's blog, and launched an invasion of privacy lawsuit against Cutler just last month, in which he pretty much repeats all the steamy stuff we already read about him. Spanking. Hair pulling. Is he boasting or what?

Personally, I don't know what to make of our nation's capital any more. On the one hand, I agree with the author: It is a pretty dull town. It is crammed with a lot of badly dressed people who don't wear NARS lipstick or carry Kate Spade bags. On the other hand, it has Cutler, our own Françoise Sagan, and say what you will, she seems to have made the most of her time here. ♦

Fighting the Infidel

The East-West holy wars are not just history.

BY STEVEN OZMENT

Oxford historian Christopher Tyerman maintains that the four centuries of holy war known as the Crusades are both the best recognized and most distorted part of the Christian Middle Ages. He faults scholars, pundits, and laymen on both sides of the East-West divide for allowing the memory of the Crusades to be "woven into intractable modern political problems," where it "blurs fantasy and scholarship" and exacerbates present-day hatreds. He has in mind the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Western racism, anti-Semitism, and American-European imperialism.

Fighting for Christendom
Holy War and the Crusades
by Christopher Tyerman
Oxford, 247 pp., $26

A prolific expert on the history of Crusades, Tyerman offers a succinct summary of what they were and were not. An evenhanded critic, he levels his lance at both sides: the Islamic and Arab apologists who trace Western imperialism and cultural aggression back to the Crusades, and the "First World liberals and neoconservatives" who demonize a complex and diverse Islamic world with no more sophistication than the crusading polemicists of the 12th and 13th centuries.

As Tyerman persuasively describes them, the Crusades were neither an attempt at Western hegemony, nor a betrayal of Western Christian teaching and practice. When Pope Urban II invoked the First Crusade in 1095, he was belatedly fulfilling a request from Byzantine emperor Alexius I, who desperately needed Western knights to help him reestablish Eastern Christian control of the Middle East after the death of the Turkish Sultan of Baghdad. By sending such assistance, the pope projected the religious ideology and power of an ascending Western church.

The warriors who answered the pope's call were known as *crucesignati*, "those signed with the cross." Each pledged by word and dress to rescue the holy city of Jerusalem from the Muslims, or to die trying. Rather than simple *realpolitik* and self-aggrandizement, the guiding ideology of crusading was that of religious self-sacrifice and revival, and directly modeled on the Sacrament of Penance. As the priest had the power to transform mortal sins deserving an eternal punishment into mundane penalties easily dispensed by good works this side of eternity, the pope drew on the church's proclaimed "treasury of [Christ's] merit" to erase the mortal sins of warriors who died for God and Church while fighting the Infidel in the Holy Land. Pope Urban was not the first to make such a connection. In the ninth century, Pope John VIII had offered the same indulgence to Christians who died fighting Muslims then threatening Rome.

On its face, the "transformation" of the cross of Christ into a flag of war gives every appearance of a hegemonic move clothed in religion. As Tyerman points out, the Crusades were pure "butchery," with massacres of Rhineland Jews en route and bloodbaths for Muslims and Jews once in Jerusalem. Among contemporaries the crusaders had the mixed reputation of "chivalric heroes and gilded thugs." In the early 13th century, the soldiers of

Steven Ozment, the McLean professor of ancient history at Harvard, is the author of A Mighty Fortress: A History of the German People.

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the Fourth Crusade, originally destined for Egypt, became the pliant mercenaries of their Venetian creditors, ultimately turning their lethal skills on the inhabitants of Constantinople.

Although Tyerman fully appreciates the unholy mix that was the crusade ("warfare decked out in moral and religious terms"), he makes a persuasive case that crusading was not undertaken for bread and booty alone. Of the 100,000 crusaders who left for Jerusalem in 1096, an estimated 14,000 reached the holy city, and by 1100 fewer than 300 may have remained—hardly a venture capitalist's dream. Still, in later centuries, when the Crusade targeted heretics, Jews, nonconformist Christians, and enemies of the pope in Spain and the Baltic lands, the "Jerusalem indulgences" and Sacrament of Penance were still prominently there to entice and assure.

By contrast, Muslim holy wars ("jihads"), as taught in the Koran, were first and foremost a personal inner struggle for moral purity and secondarily an external struggle against Jewish and Christian infidels—a distinction and restraint Tyerman finds laudable by comparison with the "oxymoronic" Western holy war, which he calls "the ultimate manifestation of conviction politics." Yet, while Muslims grudgingly tolerated the People of the Book (Jews, Christians, Muslims) within Muslim lands, non-Muslims in lands beyond remained fair game to Islam's holy warriors. It is not clear why "oxymoronic" would not also apply to Muslim holy wars in the East. In the end, the religious war, whether the Western crusade or the eastern jihad, seems then as now to have been something of a free radical within both cultures. As Tyerman himself puts it: "So pervasive were the symbols and habits of crusading that they could be turned to any political conflict that boasted an ideological tinge." One may ask whether that is not also true of the jihad we witness today in the Middle East?

Since the end of the last literal crusade, which occurred in the early 18th century, Tyerman sees the crusade surviving in the West as a potent metaphor for "any vigorous good cause" one might want to pursue against an adversary. As such, it is a word that can still break bones. Now disconnected from its medieval Christian roots in sacramental magic and holy war, it is today a "baleful and intellectually bogus" specter "stalking international politics." Here, Tyerman has in mind both skittish Near Eastern radicals and terrorists, who see Western neocrusaders at every turn, and American neoconservatives, whose eyes are also continuously popping.

In the end, the plea of *Fighting for Christendom* is to lay the era of the Crusades to rest and to put an end to a "cheap historicism" that invokes their historical memory only to inflame, debase, and confuse. Clearly, Tyerman wants President Bush to stop talking about "axes of evil" and Middle Eastern presidents to forgo visions of "mailed knights fighting for the faith under an alien sun."

Here the reader may think Tyerman protests too much and in vain. He tells us that "the Middle Ages were no more or less a period of faith and skepticism than the 21st century." If that is true, why should the 21st century be any more or less peaceful or warring a period than the Middle Ages?

The problems that drive us to history in search of a resolution are often beyond the cure of words spoken or suppressed. They are the intractable problems Tyerman finds crusading language can only exacerbate. We go to history because we cannot talk such problems away and bask in the end of history. We study the past not to avoid repeating it, even in metaphorical form, but to learn how previous generations survived the same mistakes we make. The answer we find there is blood, sweat, and tears.

Early in *Fighting for Christendom*, Tyerman raises the question of why the Crusades ended. He tells us that the Reformation first "loosened the grip" of the crusading ideology by challenging the medieval belief system that made it possible. The reformers deemed that system to be spurious and corrupt, along with the papacy and penitential system that empowered it. The result, as history records, was a mighty deconstruction, first with ridicule and scorn, and in the end with torch and sword. ♦

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Yankee Zelig

He knew just about everyone and went just about everywhere. **BY EDWARD ACHORN**

John Ledyard may be the most famous American you've never heard of. Two centuries ago, he was an "international celebrity" who sailed around the globe with Captain Cook, befriended such luminaries as Thomas Jefferson, and dreamed of walking the world. By the time newspapers throughout America and Europe reported his death, in 1789, "Ledyard the Traveler" had become "a legendary figure."

John Ledyard

Basic Books

Today, he is a historical footnote, known to buffs of Jefferson, or Dartmouth College, or others who have some specialized interest in his times. Does he deserve greater renown? James Zug, a magazine writer and author of an acclaimed history of squash (the game), certainly makes a case for it in this biography, as well as in his new collection of Ledyard's writings.

American Traveler
The Life and Adventures of the Man Who Dreamed of Walking the World
by James Zug
Basic, 286 pp., $25

The Last Voyage of Captain Cook
The Collected Writings of John Ledyard
edited by James Zug
National Geographic, 304 pp., $16

Zug describes Ledyard as a man of "magnetism, resourcefulness, unbridled imagination, and rare ability to endure hardship," as well as one who possessed "capacious intellect," with a knack for "debunking the beliefs of his day." No less an authority than Jefferson called him a "man of genius."

So why did I have the sense that I was reading about some Zelig-like character at the center of a celebrity-strewn life, as if Ledyard had stumbled through history and bumped into the right people, at the right 18th-century cocktail parties, at the right time? Ledyard's adventures seem to underscore Woody Allen's contention that showing up is 90 percent of life.

The man's personality is elusive, to say the least, and fades entirely into the scenery at some points, including in his own memoirs of the Cook voyage. Perhaps that is why his previous biographers—Jared Sparks in 1828, James Kenneth Munford in 1939, and Helen Augur in 1946—felt the need to dress up his role, "even," Zug notes, "creating imaginary scenes." The life is crowded with an all-star cast that includes not only Cook and Jefferson, but also the Marquis de Lafayette, John Paul Jones, Robert Morris, and Catherine the Great, as well as tales of seafaring derring-do and romantic adventures with the sexy, highly accommodating native girls of Polynesia.

Reading through it, I was reminded of John Lennon's famous crack about *Help!*—that the Beatles were extras in their own movie. Ledyard seems to be somewhere in every scene, as he is comically blown off course from adventure to adventure; but he doesn't seem to be controlling much of the action.

Instead of a great historic figure, we find a boyish smart-aleck who fails at attempt after attempt to become rich and successful—and, finally, by this means, manages to obtain fame. What motivated Ledyard? Zug makes a speculative case for mental illness, citing "his days spent in bed, his mood swings, his shopping sprees, his rash exits, wildly bizarre entrances, his intense garrulousness, and his physical feats. As if he knew he was not well, he kept walking away from his family, friends, and women he loved before he blew up at them and ruined it all." In an interview, Zug boils it down by describing Ledyard as a "jerk."

Jerk or not, he did lead a life so quirky that, at times, it reads like a discarded Monty Python script. Born in 1751, son of a Connecticut sea captain who died in Ledyard's youth, he wowed his fellow freshmen at two-year-old Dartmouth College by arriving in a sulky—a ridiculously fancy vehicle to have dragged into the New Hampshire wilderness of muddy "old corduroy log roads, drovers' trails and Indian paths," interrupted by streams not yet bridged.

"It was the first carriage of the kind ever on Dartmouth plain," recalled one classmate, and the fact that Ledyard had managed to get it there at all "displayed in him a fortitude, & something of that spirit of enterprize, for which his after life was so highly distinguished."

It also displayed in him a lifelong tendency toward flakiness. When a certain disagreement arose over tuition—Dartmouth's first president, Eleazer Wheelock, found that Ledyard had misled him about a bequest that was supposed to pay his way—Ledyard felled a big tree, hollowed out a canoe, and paddled away for home on the Connecticut River. Many years later, Robert Frost, another Dartmouth escapee, dubbed him "the patron saint

Edward Achorn is deputy editorial page editor of the Providence Journal.

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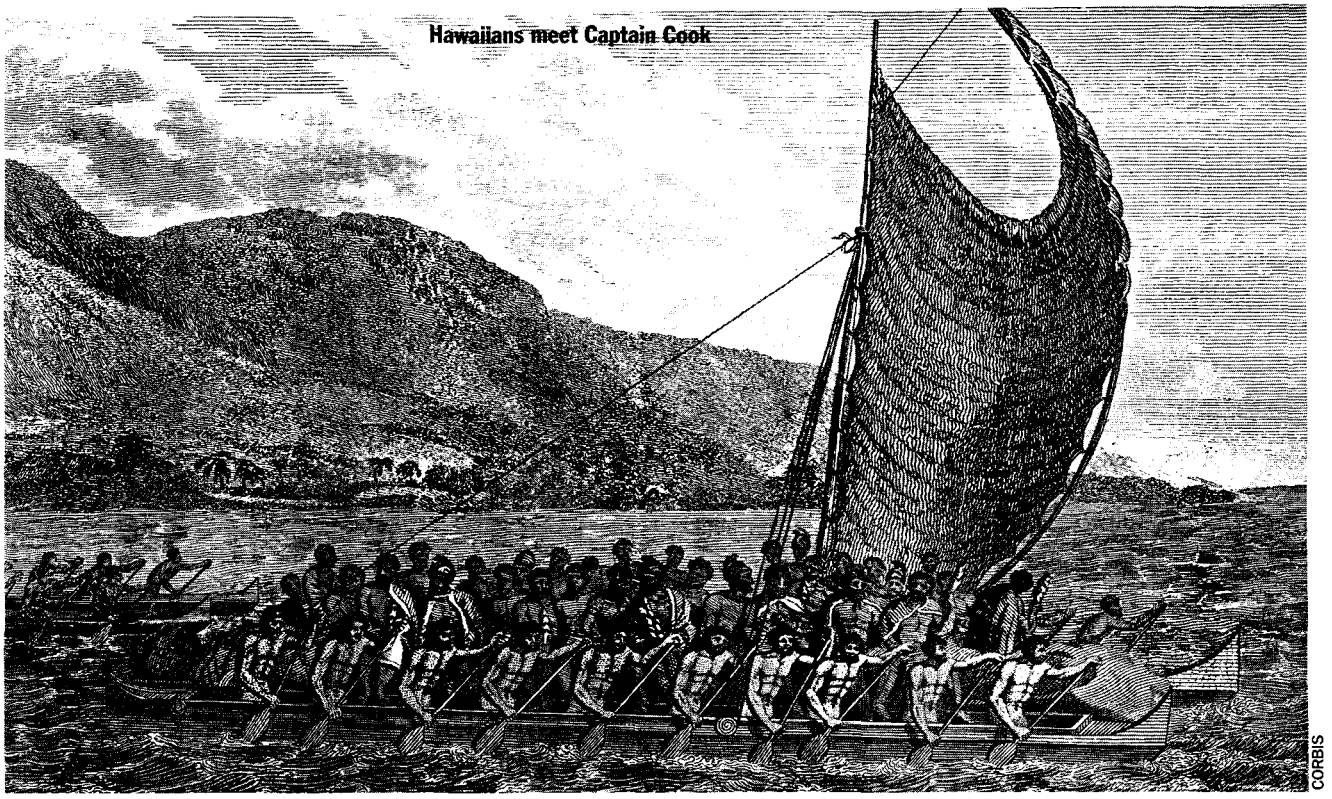
Hawaiians meet Captain Cook

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of freshmen who run away." To this day, Dartmouth undergraduates reenact Ledyard's famous journey, some of them supplying the innovation of paddling through Hanover in the nude.

His failure to complete his college studies was soon matched by a failure to secure a post as a clergyman. So he went to sea. After arriving in Britain, he found himself impressed into the Royal Navy, thus managing to obtain the break of his lifetime: joining Captain Cook on his third (and, as it turns out, last) voyage in search of the nonexistent Northwest Passage to the riches of the East.

A bit player on the trip, Ledyard still got a bestselling book out of the experience, although he misled readers into assuming he had witnessed the murder of Cook by Hawaiians. Ledyard's book prompted the Connecticut legislature to pass copyright protection, leading the way for all states to protect intellectual property. In a classic Ledyardian irony, it turned out that the adventurer had plagiarized his final 38 pages, stealing them verbatim from an anonymous author's account of the same trip.

But the Cook voyage was enough to make his name. Ledyard emerged as the only American to have seen the West Coast of America, Alaska, and Hawaii, and he used that distinction to stoke the interest of such intellectuals as Jefferson. The future president urged Ledyard to explore America's interior—before eventually turning to the more reliable Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. For the last six years of his life, Ledyard lived off contributions from investors and travel fanatics. His dream of returning to the Northwest to get rich in fur trading never came to fruition.

His great plan to walk the world went awry for two reasons: one, he quickly discovered that Russia was too big and dangerous to cross on foot (he took post-office carriages and highways instead, crossing the vast country all the way to the frigid Siberian city of Yakutsk); and two, the Empress Catherine was not amused when she discovered he had entered her country despite her explicit refusal to grant him a passport. She had him arrested and hustled back to the West. In England, he ran into wealthy investors who wished to finance a journey to deepest Africa. He made it as far as Cairo, where he caught dysentery, took too large a dose of emetic, and vomited so violently that he died, age 37.

Zug tells all this in a style rich in detail, demonstrating a strong command of his source material, and gets through Ledyard's busy life in 286 pages. This book is admirably peppered with Ledyard's best, almost epigrammatic, observations, culled from his journals and letters. I never felt swept along by the narrative—more dragged along, station to station—and some of Zug's phrases land with a leaden thud: "But Ledyard eschewed ordinary professions. He pined for the life of adventure." Or: "The last few days before leaving were riven with excitement." Or: "The loss of a baby brother was saddening . . ." Or this peculiar statement about Paris, *circa* 1785: "London was a thousand years old. Paris was new. The aphorism was true: London was a riddle, Paris was an explanation." Not to this reader.

I actually found Ledyard himself, plagiarist or not, a more engaging stylist (though some of his letters collected by Zug seemed almost indecipherable). It is easy to see why Herman Melville, drawn to telling his own tales of romance and intellectual adventure, was a fan (he even cited Ledyard in *Moby Dick*). As Zug notes, Ledyard's travel writing is fascinating because it focuses on people, not things, and he is an unusually generous and fair-minded observer of the natives he encountered.

These two volumes are welcome additions to the literature of exploration and adventure—even if Mr. Ledyard, the hero at the center, seems rather hollow. ♦

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The Harvest Season

A fictional glimpse of a brave new world.

BY CYNTHIA GRENIER

Kazuo Ishiguro's latest novel is an important, serious, and deeply depressing work. Set in the 1990s—a kind of parallel '90s, not the one we all experienced—Ishiguro's story opens through the narrative voice of Kathy H. On page one, she tells us in a flat, matter-of-fact way that she is 31 and has been a carer now for over 11 years. By way of explanation, she says that she's been a carer for so long because "my donors have always tended to do much better than expected. Their recovery times have been impressive, and hardly any of them have been classified as 'agitated', even before fourth donation." The monotone in which she delivers what amounts to the essence of the novel gives you a chill as you realize Ishiguro is telling us a story about what life would be like for the donors—clones—created by society to supply organs for those in need.

Kazuo Ishiguro

Knopf

Never Let Me Go
by Kazuo Ishiguro
Knopf, 288 pp., $24

Kathy is thinking of the life she and her fellows led in what seemed like a fine private school, Hailsham, in the English countryside. Gradually, and without any explicit description of who these children were or the future planned for them, let alone defining "the fourth donation" or "completing," Ishiguro leads you through Kathy's memories as gradually the sheer horror of it all comes in upon you.

The children are told fairly early in life that they will never be able to bear children. At one point, as a young teenager, Kathy dances to her favorite cassette, whose theme is "Baby, never let me go." She is clutching a pillow to herself, swaying with her eyes shut, when, suddenly opening them, she sees one of the school's guardians watching her and sobbing. Kathy notes that the woman had the "same look in her eyes she always had when she looked at us, like she was seeing something that gave her the creeps. Except this time there was something else, something extra in that look I couldn't fathom."

The children are encouraged to be creative—painting, drawing, sculpting—and each month a woman would come to select the most promising work to take to a supposed gallery. You don't learn why until further in the story, when Kathy and her fellow student, Tommy, find one of their old guardians from Hailsham in the hope of obtaining a "deferral," as they are in love. Miss Emily, now in a wheelchair, tries to explain why art was being collected from the children: "We took away your art," she explains, "because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to *prove you had souls at all*." And they learn that there are no "deferrals" in their life.

Ishiguro does plant hints as to the nature of the children at Hailsham. Kathy recalls that the guardians were really strict about smoking—"If we were being shown a picture of a famous writer or world leader, and they happened to have a cigarette in their hand, then the whole lesson would grind to a halt." When one of the guardians is asked whether she ever smoked, "Mrs. Lucy weighing each word carefully says, 'It's not good that I smoked. It wasn't good for me so I stopped it. But what you must understand is that for you, all of you, it's much, much worse to smoke than it ever was for me.'"

In its way, *Never Let Me Go* reads like a mystery, Ishiguro dropping clues, details that join gradually until you know at last who done it. The story has a very real poignancy that goes considerably beyond its ambition. You come away caring about these "creatures," as one of the guardians refers to them.

And to lend a certain degree of horror to your reading, consider a recent story in the *Washington Times*: "Transplants from Living Rated Better than Deceased." In a study examining data from the Richmond-based United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) regarding pediatric liver transplants performed between 1987 and 2004, researchers discovered a failure rate of nearly 40 percent for transplants involving dead donors, compared with 27 percent in cases coming from living donors. Kazuo Ishiguro must have felt a genuine shudder seeing the potential for life resembling art—and looming, perhaps, on the not-too-distant horizon. ♦

Cynthia Grenier writes the Mag Trade *column for the* Washington Times.

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To Die In Madrid

Two American Masters and the Spanish Civil War.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Writers and wars have a distinctive history. Reporting on wars has completely changed the lives of some authors, even after they have established their careers. But the spectacle of armed combat, whether or not it is directly experienced, may be a breaker as well as maker of literary reputations.

The Spanish Civil War, approaching its 70th anniversary, has largely slipped over the horizon of contemporary consciousness, but it remains the quintessential "writers' war." The conflict attracted talents as varied as those of George Orwell and André Malraux. *Homage to Catalonia*, based by Orwell on his experience as a soldier in the trenches, sold few copies over some decades but is now considered the greatest literary work produced by the Spanish torment in any language, including the Castilian and Catalan of the Iberian peninsula itself. Malraux, a gaudy star of French culture, produced an overwrought novel about the war, *Man's Fate*, but has meanwhile been exposed by such biographers as Curtis Cate and Olivier Todd as a falsifier of his revolutionary exploits.

For Americans, two novelists are prominently associated with the Spanish war: Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos. They had been close friends, as American participants in the Paris literary scene of the 1920s, and both had gained critical and financial success by the time the Spanish war erupted. But by then their friendship had become strained by personal rivalry. The moral complexity of Spain, in which a conservative military faction was supported by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, and left-wing Republicans were betrayed by Soviet agents allegedly sent to reinforce their defense, soon drove "Hem" and "Dos," as everyone knew them, irrevocably apart.

The Breaking Point
Hemingway, Dos Passos, and the Murder of José Robles
by Stephen Koch
Counterpoint, 308 pp., $24.95

Their split was made inevitable by the Soviet secret police liquidation, in Spain in 1937, of José Robles, a professor of Spanish at Johns Hopkins, who had been a companion of Dos Passos, and translator of his work, for 20 years. The break has been chronicled by every major historian of the war and all the biographers of the two literary giants. Stephen Koch, a New York writer, has aimed at a definitive account of this defining moment in 20th-century intellectual history. Although his attempt at an authoritative retelling may ultimately have failed, this book nonetheless deserves to be read.

As Koch describes the sequence of events, Hem and Dos were each at a crossroads when the fighting in Spain began in July 1936. Hemingway, who turned 37 that month, had attained considerable fame with such novels as *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), but his productivity had slowed, and he faced serious difficulties in completing *To Have and Have Not*, which would appear in 1937. Hemingway's books were driven by the fatalism and narcissism of his characters. It should come as no surprise that Hemingway was enraged with jealousy at the growing reputation, just at that time, of Dos Passos. The latter's great achievement, the *U.S.A.* trilogy, had just been completed with the publication of *The Big Money*. Dos Passos was an authentic radical celebrity, whose picture had appeared on the cover of *Time*.

Dos Passos was 40, and possessed a body of work that could not have been more different from Hemingway's. His trilogy, which had begun with *The 42nd Parallel* (1930) and continued with *1919* (1932), lacked a narrative consistency or character development. Rather, the series introduced "Camera Eye" and "Newsreel" passages in an illuminated view of American life during and after World War I. But both men learned much from the European *avant garde*. Hemingway adopted the spare realism of the Spanish author Pío Baroja; Dos Passos was also influenced by Baroja, but borrowed much more from the spontaneous, stream-of-consciousness technique associated with French poet and traveler Blaise Cendrars.

Both men also identified with Spain, although Dos Passos really knew Spanish history, literary traditions, and religious culture, while Hemingway reveled in "tourist Spain" —exemplified by his fixation on bullfighting, even then considered by most Spaniards an affectation of the decayed ruling classes. Much more important, however, Dos Passos had been one of America's most prominent extreme leftists for a decade, and had a deep emotional identification with the revolutionary movements of the Spanish labor and peasant classes.

When Hemingway felt called to Spain, his politics were vague, and he barely comprehended which side was which. All Hem knew was that his inspiration had gone sour, and that he needed a new war, preferably in a picturesque, dramatic setting. But the identification of Dos with the radical left, at a time when communism seemed to grow ever stronger in America, allowed him temporarily to outpace Hem as a public personality, which naturally fed Hemingway's irritability.

It has been understood since the end of the Spanish war that it was the

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great watershed for the Western left of the 1930s, pitting idealists, who became anti-Stalin and eventually anti-Communist, against cynics and opportunists pleased to follow whatever demands the Kremlin might make, at least in the short term. Dos Passos epitomized the disillusioned, while Hemingway, as portrayed by Koch and many others before him, and as made clear by his own statements, was a perfect embodiment of the "fellow-traveling," pro-Stalin "liberal."

The Stalinists and their acolytes broadcast far and wide their allegedly implacable hatred of fascism and profound love for humanity. But in reality, they were more typically avid for the secret-police power of life and death over those they resented, and were excited to excess by the fantasy that they had joined the winning side in the battle for the future. They gloried in their hardness, heartlessness, and subservience to Moscow's killing machine.

The exiled Leon Trotsky, and the surrealist poet André Breton, in a statement published coincidentally with the events described in this book, wrote: "The totalitarian regime of the USSR, working through the so-called cultural organizations it controls in other countries, has spread over the entire world a deep twilight hostile to every sort of spiritual value; a twilight of filth and blood in which, disguised as intellectuals and artists, those men steep themselves who have made of servility a career, of lying-for-pay a custom, and of apologetics for crime a source of pleasure."

Hemingway, with his obsessive machismo, cruelty to "his" women, and sadism in other personal relationships, was the perfect collaborator for the Stalinists in Spain. To him, the brutalities of the Russian secret police were little more than a variation on his favorite manly pursuits, a kind of big-game hunting with dissident leftists as objects of the safari.

In Koch's retelling, Hem and Dos had joined a number of leftist writers and intellectuals, including Dorothy Parker and Lillian Hellman, in producing a documentary film on the war, to be titled *The Spanish Earth*. Both Hem and Dos went to Spain, but in the age when such journeys were slow and complicated, they did not arrive until some seven months of war had gone by: Hemingway in February 1937, and Dos Passos a few weeks later. And just as Dos Passos had a deeper understanding of Spanish mores than Hemingway, so he also had a clearer perception of the political conditions imposed by Stalin's support for the Spanish Republicans.

Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos

Counterpoint Press

The Spanish war had begun as a social revolution, led by militant socialists, anarchists, and anti-Stalinist Marxists—all of whom viewed the Soviet model of governance with great suspicion, and who genuinely believed, rightly or wrongly, that a radical transformation of the country could be effected without transgressing personal or collective freedoms. But after those seven months, Soviet controllers had significantly usurped power from the indigenous Spanish revolutionaries.

When Hemingway got to Madrid, which was still under siege by the forces of Gen. Francisco Franco, he turned himself out in fancy high boots and pseudo-military dress, and began his usual public celebration of "the good life." The leftist author Josephine Herbst, in her memoir *The Starched Blue Sky of Spain*, recalled with disgust how, amid general hunger and severe rationing in the city, when a slice of bread was the daily allotment of food, Hem lived in a cloud of tantalizing odors: those of fresh coffee, fried eggs, and sizzling bacon. Herbst and Dos Passos made a point of sharing the meager diet of the ordinary people of Madrid.

Dos had a special mission from very early in his visit to the war-torn country: to be reunited with his friend Robles. Gifted in languages, as well as being of Spanish birth, Robles had been assigned as a translator to the Russian military attaché in Madrid, known as Gorev. But as Dos learned almost immediately, Robles had been arrested, apparently by Soviet agents, and had disappeared. All we know, and have known for a long time (but of which Koch properly reminds us), is that Hemingway took a saturnine pleasure in informing the "naive" Dos Passos that Robles had been shot as a "spy."

The logic of Robles's martyrdom, and that of some dozens of anti-Stalinists assassinated by the Russians in Spain, was eloquently evoked by Orwell, who, like Melville's Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, long seemed to have alone survived to tell the tale, after totalitarianism had sunk the Spanish Republic. Nobody, to this day, knows why Robles became a victim of Stalin's global purges; the Moscow archives may contain a file on him, but the documentation is closed to outside researchers. In the convoluted system of Soviet suspicions, he may have been associated

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José Robles

Editorial Seix Barral

with the anti-Stalinist movement for which Orwell fought, the Workers Party of Marxist Unification, or POUM.

Since his death is still mysterious, and because Stephen Koch is manifestly more concerned with the Hem-Dos imbroglio, Robles is a spectral figure in this book, appearing slender and handsome in a photograph taken during his early adulthood; but otherwise a name without much substance. Except that he was a victim of Stalin. And Dos Passos, who already had a reputation as a possible "Trotskyite," then the worst insult imaginable to an orthodox Communist, began, in mourning for his friend, a journey away from the left. It would carry Dos, before his death in 1970, to the Republican party and admiration for Gov. Ronald Reagan of California. Unfortunately, his literary work would never regain the momentum it possessed in 1936, when he was at the height of his powers.

As the cynic he was, Hem did not long remain in thrall to the Stalinist adventure. His Spanish war novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, came out in 1940. There he expressed his distaste for the Stalinist manipulation of the Spanish cause, and the book was brutally denounced by party-line critics. It became an excessively slow and talky movie, chiefly remembered for Ingrid Bergman's cropped hairdo in the role of the passionate Maria. But few today would argue that Hemingway's later career showed sustained excellence. Spain, in a sense, broke both American writers.

Koch's lack of familiarity with Spanish sources has prevented him from thoroughly fleshing out the biography of Robles, or the broader Spanish background of these bloody and depressing struggles. In that regard, he is almost inadvertently closer in spirit to Hem than to Dos, although his political sympathies lie manifestly with Dos Passos. Koch's clumsiness with the Spanish side of the war extends to his difficulty with Spanish names, which he repeatedly misspells. He also indulges in anachronistic clichés and other stylistic gaffes that, after awhile, become vexing. Is it really correct to say that F. Scott Fitzgerald was "blown away" by Dos Passos's first successful book, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925)?

In one of those frequent coincidences of publication, a new book on the Dos Passos/Robles case appeared in Spain just as Koch's volume came out here: *Enterrar a los muertos* (*Burying the Dead*) by the novelist Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, issued by the Barcelona publisher Seix Barral. The Spanish account includes many more photographs, more about the war from the Spanish viewpoint, and even hazards a guess as to the identity of Robles's killer.

Hemingway seemed to have become well and truly intoxicated by the aura of Soviet power when he became entangled with the Stalinist purge system in Spain. At the end of 1938, he wrote to Edmund Wilson, who had been an early champion of his work, but who had also gone over to the side of Trotsky, "I understand that all of you who took no part in the defence of the Spanish Republic must discredit those who did take part." He continued sarcastically, listing the names of anti-Stalinist dissidents, whom he denounced as cowards, and of the Stalinist leaders glorified as champions of the Spanish Republic: "I hope to live long enough to see John Dos Passos, James [T.] Farrell . . . and yourself rightly acclaimed as the true heroes of the Spanish War and Lister, El Campesino, Modesto, Durán, and all our dead put properly in their place as stooges of Stalin."

Hemingway's suicide in 1961 prevented him from learning that his jeers would be prophetic. Of the Communist leaders he once professed to idolize, Enrique Lister would be condemned by the left in Spain for his bloodthirsty suppression of anarchist peasants, and expelled from the Spanish Communist party as a Stalinist, after the Soviet dictator's death. The commander known as "The Peasant" (El Campesino), whose real name was Valentín González, defected from communism and produced a bitter volume of memoirs titled *Listen, Comrades: Life and Death in the Soviet Union*. Juan Modesto, a clandestine Soviet operative before the outbreak of the civil war, died in exile in 1969. And Gustavo Durán, who went to work at the State Department after the Spanish war, and later became a target of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, was also expelled from Spanish Communist ranks, soon after the end of World War II. He fell under secret police suspicion because of his success at State. Had he chosen exile in Moscow over life in the United States, he, like José Robles, would have been executed.

One item remains. Both this book and Martínez de Pisón's owe a great deal to the work of my late mentor in these matters, the Catalan author Víctor Alba, who died in 2003 at 86. He had been a POUM militant and met Orwell in Spain. He was also the longest-lived participant in the war to continue producing significant historical testimony, and was an anti-Stalinist to the end. Thanks to his efforts, and those of others in Spain, the friends of Dos Passos and Robles have clearly won the battle of historical memory on the ground where the war was fought. George Orwell, for example, is memorialized by a square in Barcelona.

The Breaking Point is similarly important, because it will help bring to a close the controversy over the Spanish Civil War here in America, far from the bloody battlefields and cemeteries it left as its legacy. ♦

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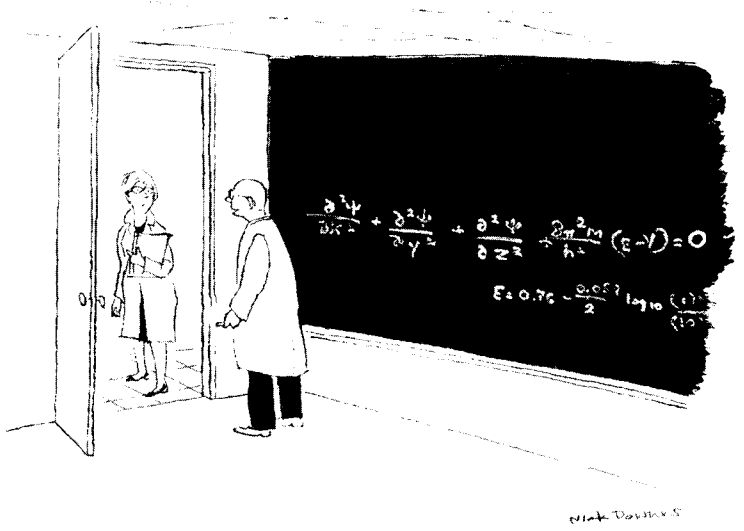

"That equation I've been working on—I've made it into a song and I'd like to sing it for you."

Books in Brief

***Taking Heat: The President, The Press, and My Years in the White House* by Ari Fleischer (William Morrow, 381 pp., $26.95)** Ari Fleischer was President Bush's press secretary from 2001 to 2003. The press didn't like him much and it's easy to see why. He didn't blab in ways that embarrassed his boss and he had reporters pegged. This book tells you more about Fleischer and the skillful manner in which he did his job than you need to know, and not enough about Bush. But that is more than offset by Fleischer's terrific analysis of the White House press corps in particular and national reporters in general. "I've concluded that when it comes to policy-related stories, particularly stories involving social issues, Democrats have an easier time with the Washington press corps than Republicans," Fleischer says. "When it comes to scandals, the press are equally tough on everyone."

He notes the practice of TV reporters ending their pieces with "a gloomy, negative, conflict-driven final sentence." And he has smart things to say about ideological labeling. Reporters comply with the desire of liberals not to be called "liberals." There are lots of "social conservatives," but no "social liberals."

And while "right-wingers" abound, there are no "left-wingers." Those opposing curbs on abortion are supporters of "abortion rights." But those opposing curbs on gun ownership are never called supporters of "gun rights." Fleischer does spot one strength of the president that others missed. That's his ability to shut out the buzz in Washington or, as Fleischer puts it, "ignore the day-to-day criticisms of the media." Understanding the press as he does, Fleischer served the president honorably and well.

—Fred Barnes

***Confessions of a Slacker Wife* by Muffy Mead-Ferro (Da Capo, 214 pp., $12.95)** In *Confessions of a Slacker Wife*, Muffy Mead- Ferro picks up where she left off in her bestselling *Confessions of a Slacker Mom*. It's impossible, she argues, for a woman to make everything perfect at home without having a wife of her own to help out. They'd have a lot more fun if they cut themselves some slack. So why bother learning to prepare gourmet hors d'oeuvres for every occasion when everyone loves potato chips and onion dip? Is company actually going to be offended by a little dirt on the light switches? Is it necessary to figure out how to fold dinner napkins into anything more complicated than a rectangle? "Busy and productive are two different things," Mead- Ferro writes.

She also makes amusing confessions about her own housekeeping habits. For one thing, she sometimes takes her family's clothes out of the hamper, folds them, and then puts them back in their dresser drawers. She's relieved herself of some of the housework by convincing her children that chores like unloading the dishwasher are fun new games. And she doesn't clean their rooms, prepare every meal for them, or solve all their problems.

Mead-Ferro blames much of the pressure women feel to be the best at everything on the products and advertising that are targeted at them. She dismisses women's magazines that discuss dessert, weight loss, eyeliner, dish detergent, room freshener, trash bags, the kind of salad celebrities eat at their country homes, and the like. She has particular disdain for anything that hints at the ability to stop the aging process. "The most insidious thing about advertising campaigns for so many beauty products is that they put the unscientific idea into your head that unfortunate occurrences such as wrinkled skin are actually a choice. That aging is—at least for us women—optional."

Overall, *Confessions of a Slacker Wife* is witty and well written and serves as the perfect companion to the dozens of volumes dedicated to achieving domestic perfection.

—Rachel DiCarlo

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Parody

"I hate to ask you for your help with something so silly but I have been nominated for membership in the Cosmos Club, which is a very distinguished club in Washington, DC, comprised of Nobel Prize winners, etc. Problem for me is that most prospective members have received awards and I have received none. I was wondering if you thought it possible that I could put that I have received an award from Toward Tradition with a sufficiently academic title, perhaps something like Scholar of Talmudic Studies?"

—Jack Abramoff, email to Rabbi Daniel Lapin, Sept. 15, 2000; Exhibit 31 at hearings of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, June 22, 2005

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ABRAMS, ELLIOTT, writer, foreign affairs consultant and analyst; b. N.Y.C., Jan. 24, 1948; s. Joseph and Mildred

the weekly Standard
July 4 / July 11, 2005

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An Arab Spring?

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By Charles Krauthammer.

We have proven that there is a universal will to freedom and to decent governance and that if you can remove the impediments and the fear, it will express itself. Everywhere.

It was the Bush doctrine, Bush action, Bush determination, and the fact that Bush was willing to risk his presidency on a war that he believed absolutely necessary that gave the Iraqis and Lebanese the power to express themselves. . . .

Democracy is on the march, and if we continue with the boldness and courage that we have shown during the past few years, we could see that revolution through. And if revolution occurs, it would be the first great step toward undoing the culture of hatred, intolerance, anti-modernism, anti-Americanism, and anti-Westernism that exploded on 9/11.

Putting Money in a Safe Place—Our Pockets

Why personal retirement accounts are "an essential ingredient in any plan to fix Social Security's financial problem." By John F. Cogan.

Unless Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are reformed, our economy will look a lot less like the dynamic free market we enjoy today and a lot more like the sluggish, statist economies of Europe's welfare states, with their lower living standards and chronically high unemployment. . . .

President Bush's proposal is the only sound way to ensure that current surplus payroll taxes aren't spent but instead set aside and saved. . . . Failure to enact the president's plan would mean that payroll tax surpluses will be frittered away on a myriad of wasteful government programs that have been funded solely because surplus Social Security tax revenues have been available to finance them.

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The *real* issues of Social Security reform

There is no longer any doubt that Social Security needs to be reformed. The nation's troubled retirement program will begin running a deficit in just 12 years. Overall, the program faces unfunded liabilities of more than $12 trillion. But while the politicians in Washington debate whether this represents a crisis or just a big problem, the Cato Institute believes it is an opportunity to build a new and better retirement program for all Americans.

Ownership

Under the current Social Security system you have no legal, contractual, or property rights to your benefits. What you receive from Social Security is entirely up to the 535 members of Congress. But personal retirement accounts would give you ownership and control over your retirement funds. The money in your account would belong to you—money the politicians could never take away.

Inheritability

Because you don't own your Social Security benefits under the current system, they are not inheritable. Millions of workers are not able to pass anything on to their loved ones. But personal retirement accounts would change that by enabling you to build a nest egg of real, inheritable wealth.

Choice

Choice is part of the essence of America. Yet when it comes to retirement, Congress forces all Americans into a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter retirement program, a system that cannot pay the benefits it has promised and under which you have no right to the money you pay in. With personal retirement accounts, workers who wanted to remain in traditional Social Security could do so. But younger workers who wanted a choice to save and invest for their future retirement would have that option.

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